

REASONS

HUMBLY OFFERED

For composing a new Set of

ARTICLES of RELIGION:

It appearing from the Writings of our most eminent Divines, that the present do not prevent a Diversity of Opinion, but may be subscribed by Persons of very different Sentiments; and therefore can be no Security to Religion in general, nor to the Church of England in particular.

With XXI. ARTICLES of Religion, proposed as a SPECIMEN for Improvement.

Every Priest and Minister shall declare his Assent, and subscribe to all the Articles of Religion, which ONLY concern the Confession of the true Christian Faith, and the Doctrine of the Sacraments, comprized in a Book, entitled, Articles, &c.

Stat. of Uniform. 13 Eliz. cap. 12.

I would by no means be so understood, as if I pleaded either for the Imposition of so great a Number of Articles, as we are now obliged to subscribe; or, for the Necessity of requiring the Acknowledgement of the Truth of the present Articles. Perhaps, the Church would be equally safe, if the Number were abridged.

Bennet on 39 Art. page 136.

Inscribed to the Archbishops and Bishops of
ENGLAND and IRELAND.

L O N D O N:

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THE CITY OF NEW YORK

IN SENATE

JANUARY 10, 1901

REPORT

OF THE

COMMISSIONERS OF THE LAND OFFICE

IN RESPONSE TO A RESOLUTION

PASSED BY THE SENATE

APRIL 10, 1900

AND BY THE ASSEMBLY

APRIL 10, 1900

AND BY THE COMMISSIONERS

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OF THE LAND OFFICE

IN RESPONSE TO A RESOLUTION

To the most REVEREND the
ARCHBISHOPS,

And to the Rt. REVEREND the
B I S H O P S
O F
ENGLAND and IRELAND:

THIS ESSAY,

*Is, with the greatest Deference
and Respect, most humbly
inscribed by the*

AUTHOR.

To the most Honorable the

ARCHBISHOP

And to the Right Reverend the

BISHOPS

OF

ENGLAND AND THE ISLES

THIS ESSAY

OF THE

RIGHTS AND DUTIES

OF THE

PASTOR

REASONS

Humbly offered, &c.

AS the present times seem to countenance, if not encourage, a reasonable and rational freedom of enquiry into religious truths, (and may that sacred liberty be always enjoyed, and never abused by any one!) there is all possible reason to hope for the blessing of heaven on the sincere endeavours of such as diligently labour to distinguish truth from error, and to have God's revealed will fully and clearly declared to mankind, agreeably to his own mind and intention; so that all people, even the more ignorant and unlearned, may in his good time, truly know and understand their duty, and by his assistance be enabled to practise it. I hope this has been the real and undisguised design of all those who have so strenuously, and with great clearness of reason, and strength of argument, represented the necessity of a new translation of the bible, and of revising and improving our liturgy, articles and canons; and which gave encouragement to the following observations, presuming they may have some tendency to promote and forward those most excellent undertakings.

I must confess, that it appears to me, a thing most just, reasonable, and necessary, that an established church should retain, and have authorised, some articles both of faith and doctrine, to distinguish itself from others ; and also as a Standard, to which its members may appeal, and make application, on all proper and suitable occasions, as well for their own satisfaction, as for the conviction of others. And in regard great disputes have frequently happened concerning our present thirty-nine articles of religion, as well with respect to their congruity and agreeableness to scripture, and the sense in which they ought to be subscribed ; as to the fitness and usefulness of their being required to be subscribed at all, as a system of divine truths ; since we find by experience, that many persons of great learning and piety, from a principle of conscience only, have refused to subscribe them, who might otherwise, as governors of our church, have both honoured and adorned it. In order therefore to clear up this matter, at least in some degree, I am in hopes it may conduce to many good ends and purposes to represent in a fair and true light, the sentiments of some of our most eminent divines on this subject ; and if it appears upon due consideration, that various and different have been the opinions of learned men, in regard to the sense and meaning of the articles themselves, and the manner of subscribing them ; and that a great latitude is now allowed to interpret, understand and subscribe them, even in very different and
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opposite senses ; this must clearly evince and demonstrate of what little service a subscription to them can possibly be, to prevent diversities of opinions in religious concerns, and to produce uniformity of sentiments. For if some good men may subscribe them in different senses, it is no wonder that bad men should prevaricate about them : and if so, how, or in what respect, can they be a security to religion in general, or to the church of *England* in particular ? Methinks this reflection alone should have sufficient weight to influence our governors, to give some ease and relief to the minds of such learned and scrupulous divines, as cannot now subscribe the articles, by causing them to be revised, and such alterations made therein, as shall be judged necessary. And, surely, this would be for the honour of religion, and the reputation of our church, both at home and abroad.

The authors of the free and candid disquisitions make these queries : 1. “ Are *our thirty-nine articles of religion* liable to no just and reasonable exceptions, when compared with the genuine sense of the word of God, as that sense at this day appears to learned and inquisitive men, who have examined the scriptures without bias, and are possessed of all proper qualifications to study them to advantage ? 2. Would it be impossible, or very difficult, to compile a system of divine truths, more agreeable to scripture, and less burthensom to the conscience of sincere enquirers ? 3. And has it not long been, and is

still judged, by some of our wisest governors in the Church, that the present times require a different set of articles, and better adapted to present exigencies † ?"—To the first and last queries, I apprehend, it may with great truth be answered in the affirmative : and to the other in the negative. But then I beg leave to differ from them, in what they seem to give a hint of ; I mean, " the requiring of *no tests* of this kind whatever ;" for the few reasons before urged, and many more that might be insisted on.

That I may proceed in a regular method, the better to execute my present design, it will be proper to observe, that the articles of religion were passed in the convocation of 1552. Dr. *Heylin* tells us, " that archbishop *Cranmer*, with the assistance of other learned men, prepared them for the Convocation. That being presented to the consideration of the rest of the clergy, they devolved their power on some grand committee, sufficiently authorized, to debate, conclude, and publish, what they had concluded in the name of the rest. That the debating and concluding of the articles, was the work only of some bishops, and certain other learned men, sufficiently impowered for that purpose ; which being so concluded and agreed upon, may warrantably be affirmed to be acts and products of that convocation, confirmed and published for such, by the king's authority *."

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† *Disquis.* p. 164.

* *Heylin's History of the Reformation*, p. 108, 121.

But archbishop *Wake* informs us, “ that a late very diligent writer, (*Strype*) will help us to a more exact account of it *. In 1551, the king and privy council ordered the archbishop (*Cranmer*) to frame a book of articles of religion, for preserving and maintaining peace and unity of doctrine in the church, to be set forth by public authority. He drew them, and committed them to certain bishops, to be inspected and approved of by them. By a letter of council, dated 2d of *May*, 1552, the archbishop was commanded to send them the articles, delivered the last year to the bishops, and to signify whether the same were set forth by any public authority, according to the minutes. The articles were accordingly sent by the archbishop; and soon returned him; when being put into a better order, and titles added to each of the articles, and a supply made of what was thought defective, they were on the 19th of *September* remitted by the archbishop, to Sir *William Cecil*, and Sir *Thomas Cbeek*, for their inspection and advice upon them. They agreed that the archbishop should offer them to the king, which he not long after did. They were then communicated to some other divines by the king’s order, about the beginning of *October*; and upon the 20th of *November* were sent back again by the council to the archbishop; who made his last remarks upon them, and in three days returned them to

* *Wake’s state of the church*, p. 599. *Strype’s life of Cranmer*, book 2. cap. 27.

to the council ; beseeching them to prevail with the king, to give authority to the bishops, to cause their respective clergy to subscribe the same. On the 2d of *March* following, the convocation met, and then this book of articles was finally laid before it. How the convocation proceeded in the discussion and examination of them I cannot tell, but they all subscribed them."

" These articles thus passed in convocation, were soon set forth by the king's authority. The convocation rose *April* 1, 1553, and the printed copy which was published, with the catechism by the royal command, was dated *May* 20, from all which it is plain, that these articles were not compiled by any grand committee, empowered by the convocation, either before or after, as *Dr. Heylin* supposed ; but being prepared, by the authority of the king and council, were agreed to in convocation ; and there subscribed by both houses ; and so presently promulged by the king's authority, according to law ||." Tho' both houses of convocation subscribed to the articles, and it would be very strange indeed, if they who made them should not subscribe to them, yet no subscription was then required, from the rest of the clergy.

The first convocation that met after queen *Eliz.* came to the crown, was in 1562, when the articles of the church and the catechism were reviewed ; and several canons relating to discipline framed. *Heylin* tells us, ' it was thought

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expedient, that the book of articles, agreed upon in convocation, *anno* 1552, should be revised and accommodated to the use of the church *.' It is observable, that the thirty-nine articles were then revised, within the space of ten years.

“ These articles, thus agreed to, and subscribed by the bishops and clergy in 1562, were again subscribed in convocation, in 1571, when the archbishop, gave express command, that all such of the lower-house of convocation, who had not formerly subscribed unto the articles of religion, agreed on in 1562, should subscribe them now, or upon their absolute refusal be expelled the house. Upon this, the articles being publickly read, were universally approved, and personally subscribed to, by every member of *both houses* †;” but such subscription did not extend to the rest of the clergy, till the 13th of *Eliz.*

But I would here observe, that the printed articles were but thirty-eight before 1571; and never had any numerical figures joined to them till that year. After 1571, the printed articles were thirty-nine in number, but never called the thirty-nine articles in the title page. The name thirty-nine articles did by degrees become the vulgar name of the articles, when cited in books or conversation. The articles were first made in 1552, revised in 1562, and in 1571 there were several alterations made in them by the convocation; and there is greater reason now than

* *Ib.* p. 600. *Heylin's hist. reformat.* p. 330, 331.

† *Wake's state of the church,* p. 604.

than ever, for their being again revised, altered and amended ; as will be very apparent to every one who reads and seriously considers what is represented in this essay.

By the 13th of *Eliz.* reciting, “ *That the churches of the queen’s majesty’s dominions may be served with pastors of sound religion, it is enacted, that every person, under the degree of a bishop, which doth or shall pretend to be a priest or minister of God’s holy word and sacraments,—before the feast of the nativity of Christ, then next following, shall in the presence of the bishop or guardian of the spiritualities of some one diocese, where he hath, or shall have, ecclesiastical living, declare his assent, and subscribe to all the articles of religion, which ONLY CONCERN THE CONFESSION OF THE TRUE CHRISTIAN FAITH, AND THE DOCTRINE OF THE SACRAMENTS, comprized in a book imprinted, entitled, [Articles, whereupon it was agreed by the archbishops and bishops of both provinces, and the whole clergy in the convocation holden at London, in the year 1562, according to the computation of the church of England, for the avoiding of the diversities of opinions, and for the establishing of consent, touching true religion, put forth by the queen’s authority.] and shall bring from such bishop or guardian of spiritualities, in writing under his seal authentic, a testimonial of such assent and subscription, and openly on some Sunday in the time of some public service, afternoon, in every church where by reason of any ecclesiastical living* he

he ought to attend, read both the said testimonial, and the said articles, upon pain, that every such person, which shall not before the said feast do as is above appointed, shall be ipso facto deprived, and all his ecclesiastical promotions shall be void."

It seems very clear and plain, from the wording of this act, that our first reformers, tho' they thought it fit and expedient to establish certain articles of religion, as the standard of the doctrine and principles professed and believed by our church; yet their great moderation and Christian charity was such, as to require from the clergy ONLY a subscription to all the articles of religion, which ONLY concern the confession of the true Christian faith, and the doctrine of the sacraments. The reader will observe, when and in what manner these articles were first prepared; and that the motives inducing thereto, 'were for the avoiding of the diversities of opinions, and for the establishing of consent touching true religion.' But how far this has proved successful, to answer the original end and intention of first establishing these articles, and requiring subscription to them, will more clearly appear, by representing the different sentiments of many eminent divines of our church, on the design, and meaning of the articles, and the nature of subscribing to them; and by making a few modest and serious reflections on what they have observed on the occasion.

"The fundamental article upon which the whole reformation, says *Burnet*, and this our church

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depends,

depends, is this, that the whole doctrines of the Christian religion are contained in the scripture ; and that therefore we are to *admit no article as a part of it, till proved from scripture*.—There was in king *Henry* the eighth's time, a large book entitled, *The necessary erudition*, set forth to instruct the nation. Many of the errors of popery were laid open and condemned in it, but none were obliged to assent to, or subscribe it.—After that, the worship was reformed, as being what pressed most ; and in that, a foundation was laid for the articles, that came quickly after it. How or by whom they were prepared, we do not certainly know ; by the remains of that time it appears, that in the alterations that were made, there was great precaution used, such as matters of that nature required ; questions were framed relating to them, these were given about to many bishops and divines, who gave in their several answers, that were collated and examined very minutely, all sides had a free and fair hearing before conclusions were made. In the fermentation that was working over the whole nation at that time, it was not possible, that a thing of that nature could have passed by the methods that are more necessary in regular times. And therefore they could not be offered at first to synods or convocations. The corruptions complained of were so beneficial to the whole body of the clergy, that it is justly to be wondered at, that so great a number was prevailed with, to concur in reforming them ; but
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without a miracle they could not have been agreed to by the major part : They were prepared, as is most probable, by *Cranmer* and *Ridley*, and published by the *regal authority* *.” This account, in a great measure, agrees with what has been before collected from archbishop *Wake*.

- As to the use of the articles, and the importance of the clergy's subscriptions to them, “ some have thought, says *Burnet*, that they are *only articles of union and peace* ; that they are a standard of *doctrine* not to be contradicted or disputed ; that the *sons* of the church are only bound to acquiesce silently to them ; and that the subscription binds only to a *general compromise* upon those articles, that so there may be no disputing nor wrangling about them. By this means they reckon, that tho' a man should differ in his opinion from that, which appears to be the clear sense of any of the articles ; yet he may with a good conscience subscribe them, if the article appears to him, to be of such a nature, that tho' he thinks it wrong, yet it seems not to be of that consequence, but that it may be borne with, and not contradicted. I shall not now examine whether it were *more fit* for leaving men to the *freedom* of their *thoughts*, that the subscription did run no higher, it being in many cases, *a great hardship to exclude some very deserving persons, from the service of the church, by requiring a subscription to so many particulars*, concerning some of which they are

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* *Burnet's* introduction to the thirty-nine articles, page 6.

not *fully satisfied*. I am only now to consider what is the importance of the subscriptions required among us, and not what might be reasonably wished that it should *.” It is great pity but his lordship had examined into the reasonableness of such subscriptions; but it may be safely concluded by his wishes, what his lordship’s sentiments were.

“ As to the laity, and the whole body of the people, says the bishop, certainly to them these are only the articles of church-communion; so that every person who does not think that there is some proposition in them that is erroneous to such a high degree, that he cannot hold communion with such as hold it, may and is obliged to continue in our communion.—Here a necessary distinction is to be remembered between *articles of faith*, and articles of *doctrine*; the one are held *necessary to salvation*, the other are only believed to be *true*; that is, to be revealed in the scriptures, which is a sufficient ground for esteeming them true. *Articles of faith* are doctrines that are so necessary to salvation, that without believing them, there is not a federal rite to the covenant of grace. These are not *many*, and in the establishment of any doctrine for such, it is necessary both to *prove* it from *scripture*, and to prove its being *necessary to salvation*, as a mean settled by the covenant of grace in order to it.—Our church, tho’ she drew up a large form of doctrine, yet to all her lay-
sons,

* Ibid. page 7.

sons, this is only a standard of what she teaches, and they are no more to them, than articles of communion. The citations that are brought from those two great primates *Laud* and *Brambal*, go no further than this. They do not seem to relate to the clergy that subscribe them, but to the laity and body of the people *."

But I apprehend the bishop mistakes the meaning of both these archbishops, who in the places referred to meant the clergy, and not the laity, as shall presently be made very apparent.

" I come next, (says the bishop) to consider what the clergy is bound to by their subscriptions. The meaning of every subscription is to be taken from the design of the imposer, and from the words of the subscription itself. The title of the articles bears, that they were agreed upon in convocation, *for the avoiding of diversities of opinions, and for the establishing consent touching true religion*. Where it is evident, that a *consent in opinion* is designed. If we in the next place, consider the declaration that the church has made in the canons, we shall find, that tho' by the fifth canon, which relates to the whole body of the people, such are only declared to be excommunicated *ipso facto*, who shall affirm any of the articles to be erroneous, or such as he may not with a good conscience subscribe to ; yet the thirty-sixth canon is express for the clergy, requiring them to subscribe *willingly* and *ex animo* ; and acknowledge *all and every*
article

* Ibid. page 9.

article to be agreeable to the word of God. Upon which canon it is that the form of subscription runs in these words, which seem expressly to declare a man's own opinion, and not a bare consent to an article of peace, or an engagement to silence and submission. The statute of 13 of *Eliz.* cap. 12. which gives the legal authority to our requiring subscriptions, in order to a man's being capable of a benefice, requires that every clergyman should read the articles in the church, with a declaration of his *unfeigned assent to them.* [q. if not only to articles of faith, and the sacraments.] These things make it appear very plain, that the subscriptions of the clergy must be considered as a declaration of their own opinion, and not as a bare obligation to silence. There arose in king *James* the 1st's reign, great and warm disputes concerning the decrees of God, and those other points that were settled in *Holland* by the synod of *Dort* against the *Remonstrants*. Divines of both sides among us appealed to the articles, and pretended they were favourable to them. For tho' the first appearance of them seems to favour the doctrine of absolute decrees, and the irresistibility of grace; yet there are many expressions that have another face, and so those of the other persuasion pleaded for themselves, from these. Upon this a royal declaration was set forth, in which after mention is made of those disputes, *and that the men of all sides did take the articles to be for them; order is given for stopping these disputes for the future; and for*

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shutting them in God's promises, as they be generally set forth in the holy scriptures, and the general meaning of the articles of the church of England, according to them; and that no man thereafter shall put his own sense or comment to be the meaning of the article, but should take it in the literal and grammatical sense. In this there has been such a general acquiescing, that the fierceness of these disputes has gone off, while men have been left to subscribe the articles according to their literal and grammatical sense. From which two things are to be inferred; the one is, that the subscription does import an assent to the article, and the other is, that an article being conceived in such *general words*, that it can admit of *different and grammatical senses*, even when the *senses given are plainly contrary one to another*, yet both may subscribe the article with a good conscience, and without any equivocation. To give an instance of this, in which there is no dispute at present*.

“The third article concerning Christ's *descent into hell*, is capable of three different senses, and all the three are both literal and grammatical. The first is, that Christ descended locally into hell, and preached to the spirits there in person; and this was the opinion of those who prepared the article in king *Edward's* time.—A second sense of which that article is capable, is, that by *hell* is meant the *grave*, according to the original word in the *hebrew*.—A third sense is, that

* Ibid. page 10.

that by *hell* in the *greek* is meant the place or region of spirits separated from their bodies, and translated into the seats of departed souls. All these three senses differ very much from one another, and yet they are all senses that are literal and grammatical; so that *in which of these soever a man conceives the article, he may subscribe it, and he does no way prevaricate in so doing.* If men would therefore understand all the other articles in the same largeness, and with the same equity, there would not be that occasion given for unjust censure that there has been. Where then the articles are conceived in *large and general words*, and have not more special and restrained terms in them, we ought to take that for a sure indication, that the *church does not intend to tie men up too severely to particular opinions*, but that she leaves all to such a *liberty*, as is agreeable with the purity of the faith *.”

The article concerning predestination, is the chief point in difference between the *Lutherans* and the *Calvinists*. And yet bishop *Burnet* observes, “ that he had stated the arguments on all sides with so much fairness, that those who knew my own opinion in this point have owned to me, that they could not discover it, by any thing that I had written.—And tho’ I follow the doctrine of the *Greek* church, from which *St. Austin* departed, yet I appeal both to *St. Austin’s* disciples and to the *Calvinists*, whether

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* Ibid. page 10.

I have not stated both their opinions and arguments, not only with truth and candour, but with all possible advantage†.” And surely this affords a very strong argument to prove, of what little use the thirty-nine articles of religion are, to prevent a diversity of opinion, since both *Lutherans* and *Calvinists* may subscribe the abstruse and very difficult article of predestination, in their own different senses, and yet both consonant to the article. Of what service then is this article? And

I cannot but express my wonder, how the limitation or exception in the 13th of *Eliz.* should ever escape his lordship's observation, I mean, as to the clergy's subscribing “to all the articles of religion, which ONLY concern the confession of the true Christian faith, and the doctrine of the sacraments.” And as these are the express words of the act, what his lordship observes with respect to the 36th canon is quite out of the case; because it was not in the power of king *James*, with his convocation, to bind the clergy, by any canon, contrary to the words of the above statute, by which they are particularly exempted from subscribing to more of the said articles than what only concerned the true Christian faith, and the doctrine of the sacraments: and before that act, there was no subscription to the articles at all required, but only of the two houses of convocation. And in that king's declaration, still prefixed to the articles, are these words, “if any

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† Ibid. Introduct. page 16.

difference arise about the external policy concerning *injunctions*, *canons*, and other constitutions,—the clergy in their convocation is to order and settle them, having first obtained leave under our broad seal so to do, and we approving their said ordinances and constitutions ; *providing, that none be made contrary to the laws and customs of the land.*” Therefore no canons can be valid, that are contrary to law.

All the articles, indeed, were established as a standard of the doctrine of the church of *England*, but none were to be forced to subscribe to more by the statute, than what are implied in the above exception. The 36th canon then, with respect to subscribing the articles, was from the first, and still is, void and illegal, as being contrary to the clause of the 13th of *Eliz.* Nor has the act of uniformity, in the 13th and 14th of *Car. II.* made any alteration therein whatsoever, nor yet established the canons. Nay, it does not require any persons to subscribe to the thirty-nine articles, but only heads of colleges or halls, and lecturers ; and even such are referred to the 13th of *Eliz.* as to the manner of their subscribing. So that the bishop seems to labour under a great mistake as to the 36th canon : and if I am wrong in explaining the above act, shall be thankful and obliged to any person for convincing me wherein I have erred. But this will presently be more particularly considered.

I shall next produce Dr. *Nicholls's* sentiments on the occasion, with his remarks on what bishop *Burnet* has before observed. “ These articles could not, says the Doctor, be designed to oblige all persons who are to subscribe to them, that they should *agree in every point of theology*, which is controverted among divines, *that being a thing impossible* ; for men will necessarily disagree in many of these things, according to the different degrees of their learning, and the several courses of their studies ; but that they should so far agree, as to own their satisfaction in those points, which are expressly determined by plain words, in these articles. So that any person who believes the *Popish* doctrines of purgatory, transubstantiation, invocation of saints, &c. cannot sincerely subscribe to these articles, which do expressly condemn those doctrines ; and therefore were required, for *avoiding diversity of opinions, and for establishing consent touching true religion*,—but as for those *theological points*, which do not affect the *main of religion*, which seldom offer themselves to be handled in popular discourses, and not being in these articles expressly determined, the *clergy are as much at liberty, to entertain different opinions from each other concerning them, as they were before* *.”

“ But then men must not withdraw the words in the articles to unreasonable senses, to reconcile them to their opinions. I know no authentic rule, besides the general laws of interpretation,

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* *Nicholls* on article I. p. 3. in the note.

tion, to govern us in this matter ; unless that of king *James I.* be one, (tho' I believe the force of it not *designed to extend beyond his time*) " that no man thereafter should put his own sence or comment to be the meaning of the article, but should take it in the literal and grammatical sence." From this bishop *Burnet* infers, (as before observed) *that an article being conceived in such general words, that it can admit of different and grammatical senses, even when the senses are plainly contrary to each other, both sides may subscribe the article with a good conscience, and without any equivocation.* These words have occasioned much controversy, and tho' his lordship may have in some particulars extended this rule too far ; yet I cannot but own, that upon the main it holds true. For, It is very probable, (continues *Dr. Nicholls*) that some of these articles were *purposely* drawn up in *general terms*, for the satisfaction of persons, who had *different sentiments in some particular points*. This no one can doubt, who reads the names of those, who compiled, and first subscribed to these articles. Some of them learned their divinity from the fathers, without any relation had to the doctrines of modern divines. Some went upon *Luther's* and *Melancthon's* doctrine ; others that had been exiles at *Geneva* were wedded to *Calvin's* divinity. Some were for a real, tho' undeterminable presence in the eucharist ; whilst others thought Christ's body was only there by figure or representation. Now can any one say, that
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these several persons held *no diversity of opinions*? or can any one think, that they would *agree to the passing these articles*, but that they thought they were conceived in such general terms, that they all might subscribe them with a good conscience, and without equivocation? Now take this either with relation to kind *Edward's* or queen *Elizabeth's* articles, we shall find that the drawers up of them, were in several things of very *different opinions*, not only before, but after their subscription to the articles ||.

For the truth of this I appeal, either to the writings of several of those divines themselves, or to the collection made out of them by *Mountague* and *Pryn*, *Heylin*, *Hickman*, and bishop *Cofens*, &c. So that it was the design of the compilers of our articles, to oblige the subscribers only to some *general agreement*, and not to force them all to consent to any one particularity of opinion. And truly this is the judgment of the most learned and zealous defenders of our church. Archbishop *Laud* says, *the church of England never declared, that every one of her articles are fundamentals in the faith*; for it is one thing to say, no one of them is superstitious or erroneous, and quite another to say, every one of them is fundamental, *Laud against Filher*, §. 14. Archbishop *Brambal* declares, that if it were not for this disciplinarian humour, which will admit of no latitude in religion, but make each nicety a fundamental, and every private opinion an article of faith, which prefers particular errors before
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general truths ; I doubt not but all reformed churches, would easily be reconciled : wherefore in such points, which may be held diversely of diverse men, I would not take any man's liberty from him, and humbly beseech all men, that they would not take mine from me. Bramhal's fair warning.—Dr. Heylin * observes, that the articles of the protestant church, in the infancy thereof, were drawn up in general terms, foreseeing, that posterity would grow up to fill the same ; meaning, that these holy men did prudently discover, that differences in judgment would unavoidably happen in the church, and were loth to unchurch any, and drive them off from an ecclesiastical communion for petty differences, which made them pen the articles in comprehensive words, to take in all who, differing in branches, meet in the root of the same religion †.

‘ But I know not how, bishop Burnet, (says Dr. Nichols) has made his own rule less defensible, by a proof from the form of subscription in the thirty-sixth canon. *I subscribe willingly ex animo, &c. which words seem to declare a man's own opinion, and not a bare consent to an article of peace, or an engagement to silence and submission.* I am not altogether different from his lordship's judgment in this matter, but am not so well satisfied with the reason he grounds it upon. For *ex animo* in this place, does not signify according to my opinion, or, as I firmly believe ; but readily or heartily. For this form of sub-

* Heylin's history quinquart. p. 2. c. 8.

† Nich. ib. p. 4. [Note.]

subscription is *not a form of subscription to the thirty-nine articles, but to the three articles contained in that canon*, which are not so much articles of opinion, as of consent; and the subscription to them declares, not what the subscriber believes, but what he readily consents to; for when the subscriber, by the second article, promises, that he will *use the book of common-prayer*, how can he be said to subscribe to this, as his opinion? he subscribes to this clause *ex animo*, because he heartily consents to use this book. But besides, his lordship is under some little mistake to think, that *ex animo* does signify, according to a man's judgment, or opinion. For, as far as I am able to observe, *ex animo* never signifies so in the *Latin* tongue, unless joined with the words *dicere, loqui, &c.* But when it is joined to words of *willing, wishing, loving, &c.* it then signifies *readily, or heartily*. So that the words *willingly*, and *ex animo* being joined together; *ex animo* must in this form of subscription signify *readily*. This may not be improper to be observed; for the *misunderstanding of this expression, in the subscription form, may occasion some unreasonable scruples in conscientious men, and keep some of the best men from entering into holy orders* †.

I cannot but here observe another error in practice concerning the thirty-sixth canon, which requires the person to promise, that he will use the book of common-prayer; but what book of

† *Nicholls on article I. p. 4. [Note.]*

of common prayer? The canon, no doubt, refers to the book of queen *Elizabeth*; but that now is not to be used, by the statute of 13 and 14 *Car.* II. what a prevarication must this then be! to promise to use a book, which the person himself knows he must not use: does not this therefore want some correction?

Again, says Dr. *Nicholls*, “the subscriber ought to assent to each article, taken in the *literal and grammatical sense*. For if people were allowed to take words in an unusual meaning, to add or diminish, to supply words to be understood,—one might, by such method, explain the bible into an alcoran.—To take words in their *first original signification, which by length of time they have much varied from*, may carry them off to a *sense very different from what they were intended*. Therefore the expressions must be taken in the plain common sense they are generally used in, or were, at the *time of making any law* ||.” In which of these senses must it be?

3. ‘But then, as bishop *Burnet* observes, there may *several grammatical senses* sometimes very fairly be put upon *the same* expressions. His lordship instances in the third article of Christ’s descent into hell; which persons may subscribe to, who by hell either understand the place of torments, the grave, or state of separate souls. This is so clear a case, that I cannot imagine, why any one should find fault with his lordship on this account *.’

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|| *Ib.* p. 4. [*Note.*]

* *Ibid.*

‘ For rightly understanding the sense of an article, besides governing ourselves by the grammatical sense of the words, the *sense of the compilers* of them is to be *highly regarded*; a law being to be *interpreted* according to the *mind of the legislature*. And where their minds in any article seem to be various, such are to be understood only as *articles of peace or communion*, and *divines of different judgments may conscientiously subscribe to them*.’ But who shall be judge of these?

‘ Another good rule is, that if any part of a law seems contrary to another, that part shall prevail, which shall be most conducing to piety, or the common good. Thus the *former part* of the 17th article seems *repugnant* to the *latter*. The first part very much countenances a particular predestination, or God’s determination of every man’s final doom from all eternity: the latter part asserts the predestination as delivered in the scripture, which denotes only a call to the gospel, and that sense conducing more to the honour of God, to the advancement of piety, and the quiet of mens consciences, ought to be retained.’

‘ Another is, that the obligation lies in that which is last said. Thus, tho’ the former part of the 17th article did countenance the rigid predestinarian doctrine, as pretended, yet the latter part, *we must receive God’s promises in such wise, as they be generally set forth to us in holy scripture*, must direct our judgment; so that I am

not obliged to own any manner of *predestination*, *decree*, or *purpose*, *but what is set forth in holy scripture* ¶.”—Thus far Dr. *Nicholls*. And here I shall only observe, that if all articles enjoined to be subscribed, were plain, clear, and agreeable to scripture, there would be no occasion for such rules to understand them, or any room to puzzle and disturb the consciences of pious good men.

I will next consider, what Dr. *Bennet* offers on the occasion. “After queen *Elizabeth* ascended the throne, tho’ no subscription † appears to have been made to king *Edward*’s articles, yet a declaration of certain articles of doctrine was printed, which all parsons, vicars, and curates were enjoined to read at their entry upon their cures. Afterwards the articles of 1562, were agreed on and published; *tho’ there was at present no law or canon that expressly required subscription to them*.——I have reason to think that in the year 1564, the *London* clergy were required by the high commissioners to subscribe the articles of 1562; but I do not find any *sufficient ground to believe, that subscription to the articles of 1562, was required of all the clergy in general, before the 13th Eliz. c. 12. enjoined it in 1571.*’

‘When that statute was enacted, doubtless the articles were subscribed.——In 1559, the clergy were required to subscribe the articles twice, once as comprized in the 3d of Archbishop *Whitgift*’s articles, and once more to a
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¶ *Nicholls* ibidem.

† *Bennet*’s essay on 39 articles, p. 371. 1715.

printed copy. To prevent this, the convocation in 1603, enjoins by canon 36, that whoever subscribes to the three articles there recited, (which are almost word for word the same with *Whitgift's*, the 3d including the 39 articles of religion) shall subscribe in these words: *I A. B. do willingly, and ex animo subscribe to these three articles above mentioned, and to all things that are contained in them *.*" The reader will consider my remarks, on the validity of this canon, in this essay.

" But it has been questioned, says the Doctor, † both formerly and lately, whether the statute of the 13th of *Eliz.* obliges us to subscribe all the thirty-nine articles, or only part of them. The act, reciting, *that the churches of the queen's majesty's dominions may be served with pastors of sound religion*, enacts, *that every person under the degree of a bishop, which shall pretend to be a priest, or minister of God's holy word and sacraments,—before the feast of the nativity of Christ next following, shall, in the presence of the bishop or guardian of the spiritualities of some one diocese, declare his assent, and subscribe to all the articles of religion, WHICH ONLY CONCERN THE CONFESSION OF THE TRUE CHRISTIAN FAITH, AND THE DOCTRINE OF THE SACRAMENTS, comprized in a book imprinted, entitled Articles, &c.*" I was willing to repeat these words of the act, from *Dr. Bennet*, for the reader's

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* *Bennet's essay*, page 397, to 400.

† *Ibid.* 401.

der's greater satisfaction, and that he may have it constantly in remembrance. But,

Before I recite more from Dr. *Bennet*, I must beg leave to make some observations on the disputes that have been, whether by this statute, a subscription is required to *all* the *articles*, or *SOLELY* to those, which *ONLY concern the confession of the true Christian faith, and the doctrine of the sacraments*. The Doctor is of an opinion, that the act requires subscription to all : I am sorry to differ from so learned a man, but his reasoning to me seems very forced and constrained ; and if the words *which only concern*, &c. are not to be considered as an exception, restriction, or limitation, to the foregoing words, *to all the articles of religion*, to what end were they mentioned at all, in the act ? for without the words, *which only concern the confession of the true Christian faith, and the doctrine of the sacraments*, there is no doubt to be made, but that all the articles would have been required to be subscribed. But, surely, by those words being added, it was intended as a salvo, or an exception, from the general injunction ; or else they were quite needless : and whoever fairly considers this, will, I believe, be of the same mind with me.

Dr. *Bennet* produces what the great *Selden*, in his *table-talk*, says concerning the articles, in order to confute him ; but, surely, the arguments he makes use off from Lord *Coke*, for that purpose, must very incautiously come from
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so ingenious a person. The words of Selden are*,
*“ there is a secret concerning the articles ; of late
 ministers have subscribed to all of them ; but by the
 act of parliament that confirmed them, they ought
 only to subscribe to those articles which contain
 matters of faith, and the doctrine of the sacra-
 ments, as appears by the first subscriptions.)* But
 bishop Bancroft (in the convocation held in king
 James’s days) he began it, that ministers should
 subscribe to three things ; to the king’s supre-
 macy ; to the common-prayer ; and to the
 thirty-nine articles ; but many of them do not
 contain matter of faith. *Is it matter of faith
 how the church should be governed ? whether in-
 fants should be baptized ? whether we have any
 property in our goods ?*”—I am apt to think,
 that the editor of Selden mistook Bancroft’s arti-
 cles for Whitgift’s, which might easily happen,
 as both were archbishops of Canterbury.

“ || As to the interpretation of the 13th of
 Eliz. in the foregoing passage, I oppose to it,
 says Bennet, the opinion of all the judges of
 England. My lord Coke has these words† : I
 heard Wray, chief justice in the king’s bench,
 Pasch. 23 Eliz. report, that where one Smith
 subscribed to the said thirty-nine articles of re-
 ligion, with this addition, (so far forth as the
 same were agreeable to the word of God) it was
 resolved by him, and all the judges of England,
 that this subscription was not according to the
 statute

* Table-talk title articles, page 3, 4.

|| Bennet’s essay, page 410.

† Ibidem, page 409. Instit. 4: c. page 324.

statute of 13 Eliz. because the statute required an absolute subscription, and this subscription made it conditional ; and that this act was made for avoiding diversity of opinions, &c. and by this addition, the party might by his own private opinion, take some of them to be against the word of God, and by this means diversity of opinions should not be avoided, which was the scope of the statute, and the very act itself, made touching subscription hereby of NONE effect.” And has it been of any effect, to prevent diversities of opinion, tho’ a general subscription, contrary to the meaning of the act, has taken place ?

As to this opinion, it should be noted, that the nature of this subscription of *Smith*, was widely different, from what *Selden* observed ; that the statute did not require a subscription to *all the articles*, so that this case is not to the point.

The question before the judges in *Smith’s* case was, whether he, in subscribing the thirty-nine articles with the limitation mentioned, did subscribe according to the 13th of *Eliz.* and they undoubtedly gave a very right judgment in determining, that he did not so subscribe. But then this judgment of the judges no way concerns the case, whether the statute requires a subscription to *all* the articles ; or to those *only* ‘ *which concern the profession of the true Christian faith, and the doctrine of the sacraments ;*’ neither of which points was before the judges, in the case of *Smith* ; who had subscribed with this
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addition, (so far forth as the same was agreeable to the word of God) which most certainly was not a subscription according to the act of the 13th of *Eliz.* the clause of which is, “ that every priest or minister shall declare his assent, and subscribe to all the articles of religion, which *ONLY concern the confession of the true Christian faith, and the doctrine of the sacraments*, comprized in a printed book, entitled, articles, &c.” whereby the statute plainly requires subscription, *ONLY* to those articles, which concern the two heads above mentioned, and excludes all other articles, particularly those concerning discipline and ceremonies, which were matters of great contest, during queen *Elizabeth's* reign.

Dr. *Heylin* gives us this account of putting in execution the 13th of *Eliz.* “ * It had been ordered by the bishops in their convocation, 1571, *that all the clergy then assembled should subscribe the articles.* And it was ordered by the unanimous consent of the bishops and clergy, that none should be admitted from thenceforth into holy orders, till he had first *subscribed the same; and solemnly obliged himself to defend the things therein contained, as consonant in all points to the word of God*†. But by the first branch of the act of parliament, subscription seemed to be no otherwise required, than to such articles *alone, as contained the confession of the true Christian faith,*

* *Heylin's history of the presbytery*, page 267:

† Can. of 1571.

faith, and doctrine of the holy sacraments. Whereby all articles relating to the book of the homilies, the form of consecrating archbishops and bishops, the church's power for imposing new rites and ceremonies, and retaining those already made, seemed to be *purposely omitted*, as not within the compass of the said subscription." And in the year 1583, fifteen ministers were allowed to subscribe in this form to the articles, "we do consent wholly to the book of articles, agreed upon by the archbishops and bishops, for so much as concerneth faith and the sacraments *." For archbishop *Whitgift* had drawn up several articles for the regulation of the clergy ‖, among which, one was a form of subscription to the queen's supremacy, to the use of the book of common-prayer, and to *all* the articles without distinction. This form of subscription was subscribed by *Whitgift*, and eight or more bishops, and published by the queen's allowance. But from that time constant complaint was made against the bishops for requiring a subscription to all the articles, as not warranted by law; nay, directly contrary to the 13th of *Eliz.*

It is incredible, says *Cambden* †, who approved of the subscription required, "what controversies and disputations arose, what hatred and reproachful speeches the archbishop endured at the hands of factious ministers, and what troubles from some noble men on this occasion." But it was

* *Calam.* defence, part II. page 111:

‖ *Strype's life of Parker*, page 328.

† *Compleat hist.* vol. 2. page 494.

was no more than what they justly deserved, for violating the act. Mr. *Beal*, clerk of the queen's council, a most ingenious and learned person, in a letter to a noble lord, says, "that the statute of the 13th of *Elizabeth* did require a subscription to the articles of *faith only*; and that he had heard it credibly reported, that it appeared by the records, that the limitation was thought meet to be inserted (*viz. ONLY*) by the lords in the higher house, when as the bill had passed the lower house in more general terms*." This most evidently proves the design and usefulness of inserting the word *only*. And it is surprizing that ever any subscriptions should be required, contrary to the very words of the statute. In the year 1584, the ministers who could not subscribe, presented a petition to the convocation, complaining, that the *bishops required a subscription to all the thirty-nine articles of religion, which was more than the act of parliament would warrant* ||.

This short remark may be a sufficient answer to what Dr. *Bennet* has suggested on that head; but I shall more fully consider it: For I would here observe, what

We are further informed by Dr. *Bennet*, that in the year 1575†, "there was a design on foot to strike out several of the articles, that the clergy might not be obliged to subscribe them with the

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* *Stripe's life of Whitgift*, l. 4. l. 9. p. 395.

|| *Tanner apud Pierce's vindication of dissenters*, p. 101, 160.

† *Bennet's essay*, page 401.

rest.——and had the design taken effect (great pity but it had) probably an edition would have been published, containing only such articles, as the clergy would have been legally required to subscribe.”

In 1603, upon king *James* coming to the crown, about one thousand ministers of the church of *England*, made “an humble petition to his majesty desiring reformation of certain ceremonies and abuses in the church ; wherein they desire, that ministers be not urged to subscribe, but according to law, to the articles of religion, and the supremacy only.” And *Rogers*, in his *epistle dedicatory*, before the edition of his articles, *anno* 1607, says, ‘that tho’ all the brethren, (that is, all those ministers of the church of *England*, who desired a further reformation) do, and will approve of some of the articles ; yet not one of them will subscribe unto all, and every one of the articles. They will subscribe unto such of them, as contain the sum of the Christian faith, and the doctrine of the sacraments. And if it be demanded, what the causes may be, why they will subscribe unto some, and not unto all ; or why they will unto those articles which concern faith and the sacraments, but will not subscribe unto the rest ? one reason is, that in their opinion, there is no law to compel them to subscribe unto them all. For, say they, we have always been ready to subscribe to the articles of religion, concerning the doctrine of faith, and of the sacraments ; which

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is *all* that is *required by law*." From all which it is very evident, that by *Whitgift's* arbitrary, illegal, and unchristian conduct, in demanding from his clergy a subscription contrary to the act of parliament, it laid the foundation of a most tyrannical power over the minds and consciences of men, and opened the door to a schism in the church, that we have all reason to believe, would not otherwise have appeared.

Mr. *Collier* also observes ||, that "by the restriction in the word *ONLY*, all articles relating to the homilies, the ordinal, the church's power in imposing rites and ceremonies, and her authority in controversies of faith, seem *omitted on purpose*, as if it had not been the *design of the statute* to bring these articles within the subscription." Nay, supposing this to be the intention of the legislature, they could not well have expressed it otherwise than they have.

All this plainly proves, that the 13th of *Eliz.* has been interpreted by many judicious persons, in the same manner as I have considered it. And for my own part, I seriously declare, that I cannot conceive how it can be otherwise explained, consistent with the words of this statute.

In the year 1675, *Tillotson* and *Stillingfleet*, by order of the bishops, met with some of the chief of the nonconformist ministers, about a comprehension †. When the form of an act of

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|| *Collier's eccles. hist.* vol. 2. p. 530.

† *Baxter's life*, part III. page 156, 158.

parliament was agreed to, and entitled, *an act for the healing and concord of his majesty's subjects in matters of religion*. The first clause of which was, "that no other oath, subscription, declaration, covenant or promise, shall henceforth be necessary to, or required of any priests or deacons for their ordination, institution, induction, licence to preach and perform their office, nor of students in the universities, nor school-masters, besides the oaths of allegiance and supremacy, and the promises at ordination of ministerial fidelity, in the form of ordination, and subscribing to the doctrine and sacraments of the church of *England*, according to the statute of 13 *Eliz.* in these words, "I *A. B.* do unfeignedly assent to the doctrine of faith, and sacraments of the church of *England*, as they are expressed in the articles of the church." These words, made use of here long after the statute of *Eliz.* on account of the many complaints made by the non-conformists against the bishop's requiring subscription, without regard to the distinction of articles made in that statute, must therefore be certainly done, with a view to express the meaning of that statute, and by which they plainly put the same sense on them which I have here done.

Indeed, the 13th of *Elizabeth* doth not distinguish the articles of faith, and those which contain the doctrine of the sacraments, from the rest; but the late bishop *Gibson* in his *Codex* sets down these following articles, as articles of faith

faith and doctrine †, viz. articles, 1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 9. 10. 11. 12. 13. 14. 15. 16. 17. 18. 22; and the articles || 25. 26. 27. 28. 29. 30. 31. as articles relating to the sacraments. So that according to his lordship's division, the 13th of *Eliz.* did not require subscription to sixteen of the articles, namely, to 6. 7. 8. 19. 20. 21. 23. 24. 32. 33. 34. 35. 36. 37. 38. 39. But with submission to the judgment of so learned a divine, I apprehend the 6th, 7th, and 8th are articles both of faith and doctrine, and which therefore were certainly intended to be subscribed by that statute.

Thus I have endeavoured to put a most material point, in a very clear light, and which seems very surprizing, that it should not have been before taken notice of; considering what great stir has been made about subscribing to the articles. And this reflection affords another strong argument, for giving relief with respect to subscription, at least according to the original intention of our first reformers. In temporal concerns nothing is more common than to rectify and amend the mistakes of former acts of parliament; and surely there is much greater reason for it in things of a religious nature. And methinks if there had been a doubt, as to the meaning of the words in the act, tho' I think they are very clear, the most Christian and reasonable method would have been, to explain them the most

† Codex page 392.

|| Ibidem page 430. 434. 474. 480. historical and critical essay on thirty-nine articles, page 179.

most in favour of scrupulous consciences ; and not to interpret them directly contrary to the words and letter of the statute.

But, perhaps, some will say, what does this statute of queen *Elizabeth* signify to us, since the act of uniformity of the 13th and 14th of *Car. II.* requires a subscription to all the articles ? I must at first reply to this by asking one question. Is the former act repealed by the latter, or not ? If it be not repealed, then what is above produced may be of considerable use to prove, that **ONLY** some of the articles are required to be subscribed. But if it be repealed, then I believe it will clearly appear to every one who carefully reads the statute of 13 and 14 *Charles II.* that none are required by that act to subscribe the thirty-nine articles, but only heads of colleges and lecturers. This, perhaps, has not been before publickly observed. Indeed Dr. *Nicholls* *, by a marginal note to the 6th section of the act, refers to the 13th of *Eliz.* c. 12. sect. 3. but as there is no notice taken in the body of the act in that section, of subscribing to the thirty-nine articles, nor of the act of queen *Eliz.* a marginal reference, by Dr. *Nicholls*, can never supply that omission.

But that the 13 of *Eliz.* is not repealed by the 13 and 14 of *Car. II.* is evident, because in sect. 17 and 19 of that act, it is required, “ that every governor, or head of any college or hall, and all lecturers, shall subscribe unto the thirty-nine articles of religion, mentioned in the statute made

* Comment on common-prayer, *vide* act of 14 *Car. II.*

made in the 13 of the late queen *Eliz.*” But what is mentioned to be subscribed in the 13th of *Eliz.* I will give you in bishop *Pearson*’s words: “thus the act speaks,—that the churches of the queen majesty’s dominions may be served with pastors of sound religion, be it enacted, by the authority of this present parliament, that every person, under the degree of a bishop, shall declare his assent, and subscribe to all the articles, which ONLY CONCERN THE CONFESSION OF THE TRUE CHRISTIAN FAITH, AND THE DOCTRINE OF THE SACRAMENTS, comprized in a book, entitled *Articles, &c.*” As to the 13th of *Eliz.* it is confirmed by the 5th of queen *Anne.*

As I apprehend, that the manner of subscribing now to the thirty-nine articles by any one, rests solely on the nature of the subscription, required by the statute of 13 *Eliz.* it is very material to know and consider, what the nature of that subscription was; and which, from what has been urged, it plainly appears to be to such of the articles, and such *only*, as ONLY CONCERN THE CONFESSION OF THE TRUE CHRISTIAN FAITH, AND THE DOCTRINE OF THE SACRAMENTS, comprized in a book entitled, *Articles, &c.*” For the word ONLY can admit of no other sense and meaning in this place. Indeed,

Dr. *Bennet*, who strenuously insists that all the articles by the statute of 13 *Eliz.* is required to be subscribed, not only argues against the very words of the act, but he seems to labour under

* *Pearson* apud bib. script. eccles. Ang. p. 361.

under one very great mistake, in thinking, that because all the thirty-nine articles of religion are in some respect articles of faith, therefore the legislature then required a subscription to them all. But where is the necessity of supposing them to be all required to be subscribed, tho' we should admit they are all articles of faith? since it is one thing to establish certain articles of religion, as the standard of faith, and another to require a subscription to all of them. And that our first reformers thought so, is evident from their not requiring for some years, as Dr. Bennet informs us, any subscription at all to the articles, unless what was done in the two houses of convocation; and when the legislature expressly, by the 13th of *Eliz.* did require a subscription, they describe in that act, such of them as were ONLY or ALONE to be subscribed. And, in truth, no one is legally obliged to any other subscription at this time. For the subscription demanded both by *Whitgift* and *Bancroft*, in the canons made by king *James* was illegal and unwarrantable, as being directly contrary to what was enjoined by the 13th of *Eliz.* and it is amazing how *they* could presume to depart from that Christian temper, and spirit of moderation, which the legislature had expressed, in limiting the subscription to such articles ONLY, as concerned the true *Christian faith, and the doctrine of the sacraments.*

It may possibly be objected to what has been said, that the 36th canon requires a subscription to all the articles; to which I answer, that the

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statute of 13 and 14 *Car. II.* is subsequent to the canons, and of a superior authority; and which, as before observed, requires no other subscription than what was enjoined by the 13 of *Eliz.* nor could the canons, made after the 13 *Eliz.* legally alter what was required by that statute; for no convocation, by their canons, can repeal or dispense with an act of parliament. So that the 36th canon is of no validity whatever, as to subscribing the thirty-nine articles. And that the 13 and 14 *Car. II.* doth not require subscription to the thirty-nine articles from any one, but heads of colleges, or halls, and lecturers, I not only appeal to the act itself, but to one since made, even the last sessions of parliament, entitled, “an act to explain part of an act passed in the 13th and 14th of *Car. II.* and also part of an act passed in the 13th of *Eliz.* &c.” where reference was had to this last statute, to give relief in the manner therein proposed, with regard to subscribing to the articles, because of its being omitted in the 13 and 14 of *Car. II.* And therefore what I have asserted, is an indisputable fact—I cannot but here observe, in what manner the 13th of *Eliz.* is recited in the act passed last sessions, whether thro’ mistake or design, is not for me to determine; but by such methods certain it is, that error and mistake are often perpetuated from one generation to another. That the reader may better judge of this; I have placed the words of the 13 of *Eliz.* and the recital from it, in opposite columns.

13 *Eliz.* cap. 12.23 *George II.*

“ Be it enacted, that every person under the degree of a bishop, which doth or shall pretend to be a priest or minister of God’s holy word and sacraments, before the feast of the nativity of Christ then next following, shall in the presence of the bishop or guardian of the spiritualities of some one diocese, where he hath, or shall have ecclesiastical living, *declare his assent, and subscribe to all the articles of religion*, WHICH ONLY CONCERN THE CONFESSION OF THE TRUE CHRISTIAN FAITH, AND THE DOCTRINES OF THE SACRAMENTS, comprized in a printed book, entitled, *Articles, &c.* and shall bring from such bishop or guardian of spiritualities in writing,

“ Whereas by an act passed in the 13th of *Eliz.* it was amongst other things enacted, that every person who should be admitted to a benefice with cure, except that within two months after his induction, he should publicly read the articles therein mentioned, in the same church whereof he should have cure, in the time of common prayer there, with declaration of his unfeigned assent thereunto, should be upon every such default (*ipso facto*) immediately deprived, &c.”

N. B. In the above recital, this clause, in the 13 of *Eliz.* [shall declare his assent, and subscribe to all the articles of religion, which ONLY CONCERN THE under

under his seal authentic, a testimonial of such assent and subscription, &c. or he shall be *ipso facto* deprived, &c."

CONFESSION OF THE TRUE CHRISTIAN FAITH, AND THE DOCTRINE OF THE SACRAMENTS] is omitted.

Why, or for what reason this was left out, I must leave to the conjecture of every intelligent reader.

And from what has been before mentioned, it is plain, that even a subscription to all the articles, does not prevent a diversity of opinion; but this shall be made yet more apparent, and that from the authority of Dr. *Bennet* himself, tho' he has labour'd to prove the contrary; by endeavouring to maintain the opinion of bishop *Burnet*, that the *subscriptions of the clergy must be considered as a declaration of their opinion, and not as a bare obligation to silence*; for the Doctor positively asserts, 'that no subscription could be meant or allowed, but such as imported a belief of the articles subscribed †:' and 'unless the articles were believed by those that subscribed them, the same diversities of opinions would still continue; nor would there be the more consent touching religion, than if those articles had never been made:' all this is very true; but notwithstanding all Dr. *Bennet* has urged, it will certainly appear to be matter of

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fact,

† Ibid. page 412, 413.

fact, and no less true, to any one who seriously considers what I have represented in this little essay, as it were in miniature, from divines of the greatest eminency; that no subscription to the present articles has or can prevent diversities of opinion in matters of religion, since there is such a latitude given, for every one to subscribe in so many different senses. And I would here observe the great advantage that is obtained by reducing to a small compass, the different sentiments of divines, thereby to compare them together, as it were, at one view, on any subject, which is much easier for the memory, than when they lie dispersed in many volumes.

But I proceed further to consider Dr. *Bennet*, who quotes these words of archbishop *Brambal* ||: “ we do not suffer any man to reject the thirty-nine articles of the church of *England* at his pleasure; yet neither do we look upon them as essentials of saving faith, or legacies of Christ and his apostles; but in a mean, as pious opinions settled for the preservation of unity; neither do we *oblige any man to believe them, but only not to contradict them.*—Again, *neither doth the church of England desire any of these questions, as necessary to be believed, either necessitate medii, or necessitate præcepti, which is much less; but only bindeth her sons, for peace-sake, not to oppose them.* Now, whoever reads these passages, says *Bennet*, cannot but perceive, that the archbishop speaks of what our church requires

|| Ibid. page 431, 432.

quires of the laity in general, and not of the subscription required by the 36th canon." But this last I have fully proved to be of no validity whatever. Here again the Dr. is certainly mistaken, for, surely, the archbishop by *sons* could not mean the *laity* but the *clergy*. For if bishops are the fathers of the church, the clergy must in a spiritual sense, be their *sons*, and not the laity; which are generally distinguished by the people, or laity. These words of archbishop *Brambal* deserve the serious consideration of all our governors in church and state.

Dr. *Bennet* produces the following passage of bishop *Stillingfleet* †. "The church of *England* makes no articles of faith, but such as have the testimony and approbation of the whole Christian world of all ages, and are acknowledged to be such by *Rome* itself; and in other things she requires subscription to them, not *as articles of faith*, but *as inferior truths*, which she expects submission to, in order to her peace and tranquility." And to confirm this truth, the bishop produces the before-cited words of archbishop *Brambal*. It does not now concern me to consider what Dr. *Bennet* urges in the same place to invalidate what both archbishop *Brambal*, and bishop *Stillingfleet* have advanced, it being sufficient for my present purpose, barely to give their sentiments of the thirty-nine articles; and leave it to the reader to judge the reasonableness of their argument.

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† Ibid. 432, 433.

After the Doctor has reasoned against the two last authorities, till he seems to have out-reasoned himself, he says, “ I would by no means be so understood, as if I pleaded either for the imposition of so *great a number of articles*, as we are now obliged to subscribe; or, for the *necessity of requiring the acknowledgement of the truth of the present articles*. Perhaps the church would be *equally safe*, if the *number were abridged*; or if according to bishop *Stillingsfleet’s* proposal, tho’ we were required to own the truth of the most momentous doctrines, yet it were allowed sufficient barely not to oppose or contradict the rest ||.” The above bishop had proposed, in order to an accommodation with the dissenters, “ that they may be allowed to make an *absolute subscription to all those articles which concern the doctrine of the true Christian faith, and the use of the sacraments*; and a *solemn promise under their hand, or subscription of peaceable submission, as to the rest, so as not to oppose or contradict them, either in preaching or writing* †.” And can there be any good reason assigned, why this should not be sufficient, and equally safe for the church of *England*? as it would also be, were the number of articles reduced, and such only retained, as seem most essentially necessary to salvation, or that concern the difference between protestants and papists. A specimen of which I have presumed to annex ;
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|| *Bennet’s essay*, page 442.

† Preface to unreasonableness of separation, page 91.

which may serve as hints to some more able hand, to bring them to greater perfection. But,

I must here take notice of another observation of bishop *Burnet*, who remarks on the article concerning original sin, “ that the whole church of *England*, has been all along of one mind, to the 9th article, but in that, and some which follow, there has been a greater diversity of opinion ; for both sides have studied to prove their tenets to be at least not contrary to the articles of the church. These different parties have disputed concerning the decrees of God, and those assistances, which pursuant to his decrees, are afforded to us.” Now, if the article be so expressed, as that all parties can prove from it, the truth of their different sentiments, how does this tend to prevent a diversity of opinions ? The same author also observes, that “ in the homilies *, the scriptures are often applied as they were then understood ; not so critically as they have been explained since that time. But by this approbation of the two books of homilies, it is not meant that every passage of scripture or argument, that is made use of in them, is always convincing, or that every expression is so severely worded, that it may not need a little correction or explanation ; *all that we profess* about them, is only that they *contain a godly and wholesome doctrine*. This rather relates to the main importance and design of them, than

* *Burnet* on the thirty-nine articles, page 473.

than to every passage in them. *But* every one who subscribes the articles, ought to read them, otherwise he subscribes a blank, he *approves a book implicitly*, and binds himself to read it, as he may be required, without knowing any thing concerning it. This approbation is not to carry in it a special assent to every particular in that whole volume ; but a man must be persuaded of the main of the doctrine that is taught in them". My next authority, with respect to the homilies, shall be archbishop *Laud*, who thus writes.

‘ Tho’ we subscribed generally to the doctrine of the homilies, as good ; yet we did not express, or mean thereby to justify, and maintain every particular phrase or sentence contained in them. And the very words of the article to which we subscribe are, *that the homilies do contain a godly and a wholesome doctrine, and necessary for those times*. Godly and wholesome for all times ; but necessary for those when people were newly weaned from the worship of images ; afterwards, neither the danger, nor the scandal alike. Strong meat, as well spiritual as bodily, is good and wholesome ; but tho’ it be so, yet if it had been *necessary* at all times, and for all men, the *apostle* would never have fed the *Corinthians* with milk, and not with meat : the meat always good in itself, but not necessary for them which were not able to bear it *.” Why then should they be *now* subscribed ?

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* History of his troubles and tryal, page 312. *Bennet’s* directions for study, page 154.

I must once more have recourse to Dr. *Bennet*, who asks *, “ how that man, who believes, that the word hell in *Psal.* xvi. 4. and *Acts* ii. 27, 31. betokens nothing but the grave (as the reader may perhaps find good reason to do) can honestly subscribe this article? To this he answers, ‘ that the church excludes no sense of the word hell, except that by hell is meant the grave. The church freely allows us to subscribe that hell betokens the state of departed souls. It is true, those who subscribe after this manner, *must understand* the word hell in the article, in a *sense very different from that* in which it is used in the above *texts*; and perhaps in a sense very different from what the greater part of the convocation then understood it. But he who subscribes the word hell in a sense which the church allows, (and tho’ it be different from what was first intended by the convocation) does very *honestly*.” The reader will remember, that here Dr. *Bennet* differs from both bishop *Burnet*, and Dr. *Nicholls*. And besides, who knows in what sense the church allows the word hell to be taken? But the Doctor says, that a man may *honestly* subscribe in a *sense, different from the first compilers of the articles*.

“ When the 6th article asserts, says *Bennet*, that there never was any doubt in the church of the authority of those books which we receive and approve as canonical; it must be *understood in a limited sense, not absolutely, but respectively*.

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* *Bennet's* direction of studying, page 51.

There have been doubts concerning some of them, but so few, so short, so small, so inconsiderable, that comparatively, they are none at all *. But who is to limit, or judge of that limited sense?

On the 9th article, of *original sin*, the Doctor asks this question ||, “ But do infants also, because they are infected with original sin, deserve God’s wrath and damnation, tho’ they die in their infancy? for the article says, that original sin deserves God’s wrath and damnation in every person born into the world. I answer, that these words, as full and comprehensive as they seem to be, do notwithstanding fairly admit, if not necessarily require, a *limitation*. He who *believes both those that do, and those that do not, die in their infancy, may subscribe what the church affirms, tho’ he believes more than the church teaches.*” To what end then is a subscription to the articles, or how is a diversity of opinions thereby prevented, if we may *believe different* from the church?

Under the 11th article, the above author observes †, that “ our church’s intention and doctrine about justification by faith, are abundantly manifest, tho’ they are *unhappily worded*. And the truth is, St. *Paul* having spoken so much of justification by faith, in a *sense* which the *compilers* of our articles and homilies do not *seem thoroughly to have understood*, occasioned them in

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* Ibidem page 61.

† Ib. page 82, 83.

|| Ib. page 73, 75:

opposition to a most notorious falshood, and most pernicious doctrine of the *papists*, to express the real truth in the apostle's own phrase; but in a *sense*, tho' in no wise contrary to, yet somewhat *different from*, what he, (as later writers have evidently shewn) did most certainly intend thereby." Should not this then be expressed in words agreeable to the true meaning of the apostle? or if the compilers of our articles and homilies, did not understand what they were about; ought not both the one and the other to be altered, and expressed agreeable to reason, truth and scripture? for God's sake, why is not this done? besides, if any of the articles admit of different senses, and that they ought to be subscribed in the sense understood by the compilers; how shall we at this distance know in which sense they intended us to subscribe?

Dr. Bennet, treating of the 17th article, remarks ||, " that the doctrine of predestination has filled many volumes of controversy; and the *English* patrons of the several schemes or hypotheses have endeavoured to shew, that the church of *England* does, in this article, either plainly maintain, or at least not contradict their respective opinions.—Could I think absolute predestination true, in the supralapsarian, or sublapsarian way, I could not subscribe to the use of the liturgy.—but I do not determine, *whether our church does condemn absolute predestination, or no.*—As for conditionate predestina-

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|| Ib. page 93, 94.

tion, if she does not assert or favour it, yet the church does not in this article condemn it. Nay, there is not one syllable in this article, but what the patrons of conditionate predestination most heartily approve and teach." If this article be so expressed, as that the person subscribing, may believe either absolute or conditional predestination, of what real use is the subscription, since any one in either sense may subscribe it?

The same author observes under the 18th article †, "that tho' our church justly censures such as presume to say, that every man shall be saved by the law or sect which he professeth, so that he be diligent to frame his life according to that law, and the light of nature; yet she doth by no means teach, that none shall be saved, unless they actually believe in Christ." And yet the literal words of the article, seem to favour a very contrary interpretation. Ought not this therefore also to be altered? Again,

|| "He who subscribes the 35th article, says *Dr. Bennet*, is not supposed thereby to declare his approbation of every particular, which is found in the homilies. For tho' our subscription to the articles, ties us up to every single proposition of the said articles; yet it is unreasonable to extend a single proposition in the 35th article to an approbation of every proposition, that may be found in a whole folio book, of merely human composition.—and I dare say, whoever carefully examines the homilies, if well affected
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† Ibid. page 102.

|| Ibid. page 146, 149, 150, 151.

to the established church, will heartily wish for, and be ready to allow this *sense* of our subscription. The article asserts, that the two books of homilies do contain a godly and wholesome doctrine necessary for these times ; nor is there any doubt, but we are absolutely bound to subscribe the truth of this proposition. But the question is, in what *sense* this proposition is true, and whether that *sense* be allowed in the subscription." (the Doctor then refers to a *sense*, in which Dr. Burges subscribed) — " I do not pretend, says he, that a man may subscribe the 35th article in a looser *sense* than he subscribes the other articles, which would be knavery and prevarication, but that the proposition, to which we do thus absolutely subscribe, as fully and heartily as to any of the rest, is *not to be understood in that rigid sense, which* some persons, for very ill ends, would fasten on it. — *As to our subscription to the homilies, in reality there is no such thing required of us.* We must subscribe the article, it is true, but not the homilies. For if we were in reality required to subscribe the homilies, I think, we should be obliged to profess the truth of every proposition contained in the homilies ; even as by our subscription to the articles, we profess our belief of every proposition contained in them. — And yet I declare to the world, that I do by no means conceive myself bound to profess my belief of every proposition contained in the homilies. — I utterly deny, that a subscription to the 35th art. is a subscription to the homilies.

homilies. For we do not subscribe the homilies; but, that *they contain a godly and wholesome doctrine necessary for these times.*—Our subscription does undoubtedly extend to all the doctrines contained in every one of those homilies, which our subscription includes; and we must judge which are the doctrines in each homily after the same manner, as we judge with respect to other writings.” I submit the strength of the Doctor’s reasoning to the reader’s judgment ||. But if it be not clear in what sense persons subscribe to the homilies, ought not this to be so plainly expressed, as that all may be at a certainty about it? or what need is there for mentioning the homilies at all, if not intended to be subscribed to? and who can honestly subscribe to all that is contained in them? And now, I apprehend, that I have from Dr. *Bennet* himself, sufficiently evinced, what a diversity of opinions there are among those who even subscribe the articles.

It may tend to strengthen and corroborate my argument yet more, in regard to the different sentiments of persons, with respect to subscriptions, to give the words of a learned writer, upon an occasion, that has a near affinity to this. “I cannot, says he, but observe, that Dr. *Bennet* has altogether as little reason to subscribe the declaration of assent and consent, as *another*; he himself having, I think, departed much farther, from what is generally esteemed the doctrine of the church. His explication of the *Calvinistical* articles into *Arminianism*, nay, citing at

|| See ante *Laud* and *Burnet*’s opinion on the homilies.

at large *Arminius* himself, to shew the exact harmony between our church and that author, (*Directions for studying*, page 95—99.) is something surprizing in a gentleman that is so nice with others, in the matter of subscriptions. His account of the procession of the Holy Ghost, in his comment on the *Athanasian* creed, is as remote as can be, *both from the vulgar and usual sense*, and from the evident meaning of the compiler. Nay, he does not scruple to charge the *Latin* churches with the interpolation of *filiouque* in the *Nicene*, and thinks it probable that they did the same in the *Athanasian* creed. *Directions*, &c. p. 66. Notwithstanding this, Dr. Bennet can without any difficulty subscribe the articles, nay, professes his opinion, that by our subscription to the articles, we profess our belief of every proposition contained in the said articles. *Ibid.* p. 150.—He is against the SON being God of God, begotten of the father before all worlds; and makes him to be nothing but the father himself, dwelling in the man *Jesus*.—so easy a matter is it to blame another, and to acquit ourselves.”

I beg leave to add in the words of the same author; “let every reasonable and sincere person, especially every learned man, who knows what was the practice of the primitive church; lay his hand upon his heart, and say,—whether he does not think it *desirable*, that in every Christian country, the governors of the church should, whenever it can be done in the spirit of
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peace and meekness, *review carefully the forms of human composition, used in the solemn worship of God*, especially, such as are known to have been composed in the most dark and ignorant ages of the church, between the beginning of the fourth century, and the times of the reformation ; and *endeavour to bring them as near as possible to the practice of the primitive church*, and above all, to the *express words and directions of our Saviour and his apostles* ; so as to be altogether *unexceptionable to all Christians.*”

“ As the great design of Christianity is to establish, not an external and political form of godliness, but an inward and effectual persuasion of the mind and conscience ; could the protestant world but have *courage to part only with things confessedly spurious* ; and in point of practice, be content with what is ancient and unexceptionable upon all hypotheses, (as the first reformers would certainly have done, had *Greek* learning been at that time restored, as the *Latin* was ;) all debates about speculative matter might either well be laid aside, or, like other points of learning be continued, without any injury to religion or charity. The peace and unity of the church can be secured but two ways ; either by that of *charity*, and allowing learned men a *liberty of examining things*, which is the *Protestant and Christian method* ; or, by introducing with *force* an *universal ignorance*, which is the method of *popery.*”

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But I cannot avoid making one more quotation from Dr. Bennet †. “The church requires only the belief of the articles in general; and does not restrain us to the belief of any one article or proposition in any *particular sense*, farther than we are confined and determined by the words themselves. And where they allow a liberty, the church does the same.—When an article or proposition is fairly capable of *two different senses*; I would fain know, who has power to *determine which is the church's sense*. The church determines no farther than her words do necessarily mean; and when her words do not abridge our liberty, can a private person, give an authentic explication of her words, and oblige his equals to admit the same? if so, then every man has equal power to oblige his equals to admit and profess, what he declares to be the church's sense. And then every man will be obliged to as *many different senses*, as there have been private persons, bold enough to make senses for him. But this is absurd.—For my part, I think it reasonable to suppose, that the church intended a *liberty*, and was resolved to *determine* no more than she thought *necessary*;—and was content to leave matters of inferior moment undetermined. This was undoubtedly the case in many instances; particularly Christ's descent into hell; when the majority was plainly of an opinion, which is now generally exploded; and the church so *contrived the arti-*

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† Essay on thirty-nine articles, *cap. ult.*

cle on purpose, as that it might receive *different senses*. And why might she not purposely intend the same *latitude*, in all *other articles*, where her words do fairly bear *different interpretations*." One should incline to think from these words of Dr. *Bennet*, that the articles were intended to encourage, instead of preventing diversity of opinions in matters of religion.

It might be easy to produce many more authorities to prove the various interpretations and different sentiments of learned divines, with respect to the articles, and the different manner of understanding and subscribing to them ; especially, from the late dispute between Dr. *Clarke*, and Dr. *Waterland*, in regard to subscriptions ; but as I have no intention to revive that controversy, I will but briefly observe from the latter, the following paragraph.—Treating of the 3d article, " One thing, says he, is certain, that our church has left this article at large, intending *a latitude*, and indulging *a liberty to subscribers*. And a distinction should be made betwixt such articles, as being formed in general words, *leave a latitude for private opinion* ; and such as being otherwise formed, leave no such latitude. It is ridiculous to pretend, that because some articles are *general* or *indefinite*, and may admit of different explications, therefore all may *. But the Doctor should certainly have named, which those general and indefinite articles are, which are special and determinate ;

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* *Waterland's case of Arian subscript.* page 36, 40.

in which a latitude was intended ; and in which liberty is indulged to subscribers. For since some of the articles are left at large, we ought to have some *Criterion*, by which to judge of those articles, or else we may surely extend this liberty to all propositions in the articles, which are in their grammatical meaning, capable of several senses. However, Dr. *Waterland* agrees, that there is a *latitude* given for the *different* understanding the *sense* of *some* of the articles ; which is sufficient for my present purpose.

I will next give you the sentiments of a very fair and rational advocate for subscriptions *.

“ But what must be done, says my author, when our articles, or other public forms, are ambiguous ? even *contrary senses* are found, and likely (we shall see) were *intended, and designed in them, by the compilers of them*. The *convocation* that framed, and passed our articles, in the year 1562, were *not all of the same mind*, concerning the subjects of diverse of the articles ; in particular, the articles concerning *original sin, justification, free-will, grace, predestination, election* ; about these, some of them followed St. *Austin*, and St. *Thomas*, and the party of the *Dominicans* ; whose opinions were maintained by *Luther* and *Calvin*. Others of them were of opinion with St. *Chrysostom*, the *Greek church*, and the *Latin fathers*, before St. *Austin* ; approved by *Melancton*, and other great reformers. If we may judge by the *English* books and ser-

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* Nye's explications of the articles, page 113.

mons, that I have seen of those times, these two parties were in this nation pretty equal. Men of so different sentiments about these questions, but fully agreed in condemning the *Roman* church, as well in her doctrines as discipline, when they met in convocation, easily fell into the temper and moderation, as to those questions, that had been observed but just before by the council of *Trent*. As these, so they framed these articles, with a tenderness to all parties already in communion with them ; that is, so framed them, that their *own contending members might all of them accept, and subscribe those articles*. Nay, they, have expressed themselves so generally in some other articles, that it seemeth they *studiously avoided, the excluding or offending learned and deserving men*, who might have *contrary* opinions concerning the subjects, or some part of the subjects of these articles.——But when the public forms, have in some parts of them doubtful senses, different and, perhaps, contrary senses, what is to be done in this case ? may we, or can we, subscribe at all ? and if so, may we subscribe in such sense, tho' controverted, and undecided by authority, as our private conscience and judgment can approve and assent to ? or are we, in that case, to expect the decision and express judgment of the legislature ?

‘ To that, may we subscribe at all ? it is an honest and a reasonable scruple ; because how can I assent to ambiguous propositions ? and if there be no certain meaning in the article itself,
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but *diverse* and *contrary* ; it should seem that I assent to nothing ; or as much to falsehood, as to truth ; for contrary propositions cannot be true. I think, however, this good scruple may be removed, by considering that the government, proposing by this ambiguity, to invite the *contrary* and *contending parties*, into her *trusts and preferments*, and thereby into her *interests* ; her meaning must needs be, that *she accepts our subscriptions in our sense and interpretation* of those her articles, or public forms that have this ambiguity. And thus we neither subscribe to *nothing* ; for we ourselves have a determinate meaning ; nor to what is false in our opinion ; or that the government hath defined to be so ; for ambiguous forms are not definitions on either side ?

‘ As some of the thirty-nine articles of our church, are *diversly, and even contrarily interpreted*, and were on purpose conceived in so *general terms*, for relief of learned and good men, that could not agree in the same sentiments, as to all the parts of the subjects of those articles and forms ; so our legislators in *England*, and the government in church and state here, have always equally admitted the contrary parties to subscription ; and have *indifferently preferred* the one or the other, to all offices and trusts, not only in the *state*, but in the *church*.—It cannot, I think, be denied, that this proceeding of our legislature and government, is a *declaration* on their part ; that whatsoever *their own sense*

sense of the doubtful articles, or parts of articles, may be; they do *not impose it on subscribers*, but do leave each party to their *own judgment* so far forth." I must confess this quotation is something long, but I hope the pertinency of it, to the point in hand, will excuse the length, and not render it tedious to the reader.

Having produced, I hope, sufficient authorities in favour of my argument, I mean, that the articles admit of different interpretations, and that a subscription to them does not prevent a diversity of opinion, it may be of service to the common reader, to make a few reflections on what has been observed, thereby to make as clear and evident as possible, my design in writing this short essay, and of the intended benefit and usefulness of it at this time.

And if we seriously, and with due attention, review and well consider this discourse, it must plainly and demonstrably appear to all impartial persons, that our first reformers, as they were of very different sentiments themselves in many points of religion, so they thought it a Christian principle, that others should enjoy the same liberty in common with them. This seems very apparent from their whole conduct. They indeed thought it highly necessary, in order to obviate a difficulty arising from the objections of *Papists* to the reformation, who were then, as now, and ever will be, complaining of the danger of reforming, partly as pretended on the account of the uncertainty of stopping; and partly

partly of not knowing what were the real principles of our reformation ; but chiefly, because their *profitable errors* should not be exposed ; therefore our reformers thought it very expedient to establish certain articles, as a standard, declaring what the tenets and doctrine of the church of *England* were, and to which all might have recourse. But then let us admire their excellent moderation and Christian charity ; for Dr. *Bennet* informs us, as before remarked, that till after queen *Elizabeth* came to the throne, no subscription appears to be made to king *Edward's* articles, but *only* a declaration of certain articles of doctrine was printed, which all parsons, vicars and curates, were enjoined to read at their entry upon their cures. And when afterwards the articles of 1562 were agreed on and published ; there was *no law or canon that expressly required subscription to them.*——“ I do not find, says he, any sufficient ground to believe, that *subscription to the articles of 1562, was required of all the clergy in general, before the 13th of Eliz. c. 12. enjoined it in 1571* †”. And when a subscription was required by that statute to the articles, which was nineteen years after they were first drawn up, so tender and compassionate was the legislature towards the consciences of such men, as were truly scrupulous, that they required from them a subscription to such articles ONLY, AS CONCERNED THE CONFESSION OF THE TRUE CHRISTIAN FAITH, AND THE DOCTRINE

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† *Bennet's* essay on the thirty-nine articles, page 371.

OF THE SACRAMENTS. What a most noble Christian precedent did they hereby set to their successors, for their imitation? and how happy would this nation have been, had its governors wisely observed the same prudent conduct? but *Whitgift* and *Bancroft*, two prelates of much zeal, and little charity, artfully introduced a subscription directly contrary to the intention of our reformers, and even to the act of the legislature; and which thro' design, mistake, or inadvertency, has ever since been required and observed: *sed quod ab initio non valet, tractatu temporis non convalescit*: what is at first illegal, time cannot make valid.

And it was by this lenity of our first reformers, and by their requiring of a subscription only to a few of the articles, by which they designed and proposed to prevent a diversity of opinions, and to obtain uniformity of sentiments in matters of religion; and not by requiring subscription to a multitude of articles, which could never be the way to effect it. And therefore as it has been ever a persuasion with me, that there ought to be a public liturgy, and certain articles of religion, to which our clergy should be obliged to testify their consent and approbation; so it seems equally reasonable, just and necessary, that as the matter and language of our *liturgy* should be devout, full, and comprehensive, and yet plain, clear, and level to the capacities of all persons; so the *articles* “ should be collected from and founded on scripture, this being the only
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rule of a Christian's faith ; tho' every article be not expressed in scripture terms ||." And this is, and will ever appear to be, the only possible method to obtain peace and unity, and prevent diversity of opinions. For as to a number of articles, so drawn up, as that persons of very different sentiments may all subscribe them, I cannot see of what use any such articles can be. For as Dr. *Waterland* justly observes, " should every one be permitted to assent to words in any sense, but their own proper, obvious, vulgar sense, there is an end at once of all the *use of such assent* ; for every man may take the words in a *different sense*, and then there is no longer any agreement." Needless it must be, to have articles so expressed, and required to be subscribed, which contain tenets contrary and opposite to each other ; but very useful and necessary would it be to have articles established and subscribed, that only contain the chief articles of the Christian faith and doctrine, in order to exclude from the ministry all those who are not sound in the faith.

I must here take notice of two expressions in king *James's* declaration, prefixed to the thirty-nine articles of religion. " Tho' some differences have been ill raised, yet we take comfort in this, that all clergymen within our realm, have always most willingly subscribed to the articles established, which is an argument to us, that they all *agree in the true, usual, literal*

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|| Bishop *Connybear's* sermon on subscript. page 8.

meaning of the said articles, and that even in those curious points in which the present differences lie, men of *all sorts take the articles of the church of England to be for them* ; which is an argument again, that none of them intend any *desertion of the articles established*." Here then is a most authentic authority to prove, that the articles may be subscribed in very different senses ; and therefore are far from preventing " of *diversities of opinion, or for the establishing of consent touching true religion*." The other paragraph is, we will—that no man hereafter shall either print, or preach, to draw the article any way, but shall submit to it, in the plain and full meaning thereof ; and shall not put his *own sense or comment to be the meaning of the article*, but shall take it in the literal and grammatical sense." This seems to differ from the sentiments of several eminent divines before mentioned ; but one thing must be observed, concerning this declaration, that whatever weight it might have in that king's life-time, (which indeed could be none, if we consider the 13th of *Eliz.*) yet now it can be of no force ; all declarations of princes being temporary, and valid only during their own reign.

Having thus finished my authorities, I must leave it to the impartial judgment of the fair and candid reader, after he has seriously and considerately perused the several quotations before produced from men of such great learning and orthodoxy, as archbishops *Laud* and *Brambal*,
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bishops *Stillington* and *Burnet*, doctors *Nicholls* and *Bennet*, whether he in his conscience thinks, that the present thirty-nine articles of religion do in any measure contribute to prevent diversities of opinion in religious matters; or promote uniformity of sentiments; if not, wherein can the retaining of them, as they are now expressed in such doubtful and uncertain terms, in any respect tend to the security of religion in general, or to the preservation of the church of *England* in particular? since it is most evident, they are at present no bar to exclude any, but such as are truly conscientious, the most worthy, the most deserving; and who ought therefore on no account to be kept from our communion.

How reasonable then, how necessary, how expedient, and truly Christian would it be, to have our articles revised and improved, and for such only to be retained, as shall be judged fit and proper to be established? That so, whoever we exclude from our communion, we may be careful not to keep out men of learning and virtue, sincerity and true Christian piety, from being sons; nay, who, probably, may become FATHERS of our church. This is what deserves our most serious thought and consideration; it being a melancholy reflection to think, that the terms of our communion are such, as to admit too often men of the least merit, and yet to exclude the more worthy, pious, and eminently good. Would our Saviour act thus, was he upon earth? I urge not this in regard to our

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dissenters,

dissenters, not being one of them. But my only aim, in what is suggested by this little essay, is to have the consciences of those made easy, who have been educated in the true principles of Christianity, who would gladly become labourers in Christ's vineyard, and more especially in that part of it, established among us, rather than in any other, could they be relieved and made easy in some doubtful points, which however defensible in themselves, yet is what they cannot reconcile to the sincerity of their own minds. And what honest good Christian bishop, what honest good Christian man? whether of the clergy or laity, can methinks oppose this? O let us in time duly consider what Christianity is? what the truths of the gospel are? and how much it is our duty to have them most known, and best explained in the clearest and plainest manner? lest God in his wrath, should remove from us, that glorious light he has revealed to us? lest popery, and its inseparable attendants, infidelity, immorality, and slavery, like a torrent, break in upon us, and we utterly become a prey to the worst of our enemies, which may God of his infinite goodness prevent!

I have presumed, but with the utmost deference to our governors, and to all my superiors, to annex a set of articles, which are the substance of those contained in the thirty-nine, and that seem most essential and necessary to the faith of a Christian; and such others as concern the dif-

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ference between us and the papists. As I have no other design in publishing these, but what is just and honest, and with a view to do real service to religion in general, and the church established in particular, and only as hints, that others may improve them ; I would desire that none will be offended. If I am aiming at peace and unity, let not others proclaim war, anathematize and excommunicate me in their minds, for no other crime. I have no intention to engage in controversy. Let what is proposed, be calmly considered, and with candour ; if I am mistaken in any part, it will afford me concern ; but let me be convinced by Christian methods. Would we learn to imitate the meek and humble *Jesus* ; how easily, how happily, how charitably, might we discuss any points of controversy, even the most momentous and important ? let truth and reason govern and direct us, as well in religious as in other concerns ; then shall we shew ourselves to be men and Christians. And if we abandon passion, and all unreasonable prejudices, our conduct must be applauded by the more virtuous, honest, and judicious part of mankind ; and God will also approve of what a good conscience cannot condemn us in. Uprightness and integrity, true faith, and good morals, are the characteristics of a sincere Christian. If we are followers of these, who is there that can hurt us ?

But I am aware, that some will object to what has been so reasonably urged, and say,
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that alterations in religion will tend to create disputes, and disturb the peace of the church. My answer at *present* to this objection, shall be in the words of a very learned eminent divine. “ That disputes in matters of religion, do indeed, sometimes, disturb the peace of the church, is too apparent, from our uncharitable censures on each other, in every difference of opinion. But may it not be justly said, that this is our *own fault* ; and that our peace, if it be so easily molested, is not settled on a true and firm foundation ? Were we *Christians indeed* ; did the love of truth, and of one another, rule in our hearts ; did *unity of affection*, and mutual forbearance, the true signs of the peace of Christ, prevail among us ; disputes could not disturb or weaken this peace of the church. All controversies concerning *fundamental* or *necessary* truths, would receive a speedy decision from the *word of God* ; and those concerning points *speculative* or *unnecessary* for Christians to be resolved in, would be either laid aside, or continued without breach of love or charity ; and so could have no influence on the church. Therefore that disputes do any harm, is not owing to a free and impartial enquiry after truth, (which, in matters of religion, is the common right of all Christians, and cannot justly be restrained) but to the *way of managing* disputes, to unreasonable prejudice, and want of charity in the contending parties, and above all to the desire of *imposing* things *unnecessary*. Take away these, and disputes

putes will never *do* any *ill* to the church ; but may be, and oftentimes are a means of *discovering* many great and valuable truths, which without them would have been lost, among a multitude of *errors* ; and also of settling, and confirming in the minds of men, those truths which have been already received by them."

" If the dispute has any relation to points fundamental or practical, such wherein the honour of God, or a religious life is concerned ; it is not to be laid aside, for fear of raising accidentally any disquiet in the church. These are superior in their natures, and of greater consequence, than meer *external* peace or quiet ; and are designed to procure the true *internal* and most valuable peace of the church, founded in the knowledge and love of *Jesus Christ* ; and in order to settle also the *external* peace of it, for the future, on a more sure and lasting foundation.—It is certain the regards for the *external and appearing* peace, (tho' they ought to be very great, yet) ought never to prevail, to the prejudice of the *inward and truer peace of Christianity*. The practice of our Saviour and his apostles shews that they did not think themselves guilty of disturbing the peace of the *Jewish* church, by their preaching of Christianity ; and we think our *reformers* not justly charged with disturbing the peace of the *Christian* church, by their preaching up the necessity of adhering to *scripture only*, as the rule of truth, and against the imposing (as *necessary*) any human doctrines

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or explications of doctrines. So long as men continue fallible and imperfect, *hay and stubble* may be built upon *the foundation of Christ* ; and *chaff* may be thrown in among the *wheat*. It is therefore always necessary, for men to study and search the scriptures ; from whence it cannot be, but disputes and controversies in matters of religion will arise, which, if managed with freedom, meekness and charity, can never prejudice the *faith*, or really hurt the *peace of the church* ; but may be, and are, the chief means of preventing *blindness and ignorance*, and of preserving the faith pure and uncorrupt among Christians with *understanding and knowledge*."

"That we enjoy Christianity, in its present purity, is it not wholly owing to the free debates, and impartial inquiries, which were made by our first reformers, into the state of religion ? and have not Christians *now* the same right of examining and debating the sense of scripture, which they had then ? unless we will say, that an extraordinary power then appeared, which immediately vanished, never to be recalled or exercised again ; or, that we have a right to debate the sense of the scriptures, in our reasonings with *Papists*, but not with *Protestants*. As if the reformation had set up in the *Protestant* church, that *infallibility*, which it cast out of the *Popish* church. Or was the *peace of the church* less valuable then, and less to be regarded, than it is now ? If prescription can give an indisputable right to maintain the peace of the church,

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against all enquiries after truth ; it is plainly on the side of *popery* ; and will support its most absurd tenets. Why then should not that principle of *searching the scriptures*, and of drawing our faith from the word of God, which, notwithstanding the pretence of the peace of the church, we plead so strongly, and unanswerably, against the *Papists*, be allowed to take place in our own cause ? Are we, who have seen and forsaken many *errors*, afraid of seeing or discovering others ; and unwilling to forsake them, if at any time they shall appear to us ? *error* only hath reason to be afraid of disputes ; and therefore *Papery* and *Mahometanism* plead most against them, and object most strongly the peace of the church. But truth, or a religion founded on the word of God, hath no reason to fear, or hinder disputes ; for they tend only to reform the church, if in any degree defective ; or the more to settle it, if already sufficiently reformed. And, indeed, free enquiries and disputes, are the greatest advantage to, and friends of, *truth* ;—which is *then* in the greatest danger, when all disputes are restrained ; and when power and interest are the only oracles, where we are allowed to enquire after it.—Allow but free enquiry and examination ; hold the balance even, betwixt truth and error ; and let not interest or power be cast into either scale ; and the blessed work of true Christianity will go on apace, and *popery* and *infidelity* soon disappear in the world.”

The only thing more that can with any appearance of reason be objected, against the correcting and amending of what is amiss, is, that the altering of any doctrine already determined by the church, tends to unsettle the present establishment, and to raise doubts, scruples, and fears in the minds of men; that if they once find themselves mistaken in one point, they may think, they may be mistaken in another, and so in all points; and that therefore disputes arising from hence, will not only disturb the peace of the church, but weaken and endanger the whole Christian faith. But this objection, however popular and plausible, is weak in itself, and of very bad consequence.

The weakness of it appears in this; that if the doctrines disputed be true, then no danger can ensue by disputing them; because truth is not only itself always more plain and convincing than error, but appears more so, by being cleared and supported when attacked, or controverted by others, against all the opposition and delusion of sceptical cavillers. And therefore this will be a means of establishing the truth already received, more firmly in the minds of men; who will hereby gain great opportunities of understanding the scriptures more perfectly, which is the only rule whereby Protestants can judge of, and determine controversies, and be able to *give an account of the faith that is in them*. And certain it is, that the church of *England* hath lost no ground, by all the disputes
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it hath had since the reformation, with all its enemies. But if any doctrines be *erroneous*, they must be *destructive* of the *church's true peace*, and ought not *longer* to be *retained*; and the *amending them*, can never *shake the whole establishment*, but is the only method of carrying on, the *very design* of the reformation; which was to separate the wheat from the tares, to hold those truths only, which God's word has declared, and to receive that *faith which was once delivered to the saints*. So that this, so far from *endangering the settlement of the protestant religion*, tends to *fix it*, on its only *right foundation*. And if the detection, perhaps, of some mistakes, gives men occasion of examining the grounds of their whole faith, which our reformers themselves have not thoroughly done, what danger can there be in this? Are we afraid that the people should too clearly understand what is taught them? or that our faith should be brought to the test of God's word, upon which only protestants declare it to be built? and in questions where there are considerable difficulties on both sides, there all possible encouragement should for that reason be given to learned men, to examine things exactly and impartially, in order to clear up those difficulties.

But to suppress all debates in matters of religion, is very pernicious to true religion itself; because this argument equally serves all professions of religion; and since there are more false than true, must be a great hindrance to the *pro-*

motion of the true faith. This is as good a plea for *Jews, Turks, Pagans, and Papists*, as for ourselves. These have all settled notions of religion as well as we ; and since we are no more *infallible* than they, the objection is as good on their side, as on ours, and may be equally urged against us, as we can do it against them. So that *Judaism, Mahometanism, Paganism* and *Popery*, must by this argument always remain as it is, without being examined into and considered, as well as *protestantism*. Indeed, the *Papists* think they have a peculiar advantage over us in this point, on account of their pretended *infallibility*. But since we know and own ourselves to be *fallible* in all our interpretations and decisions of the sense of scripture, which is the only rule of our faith ; it will be inexcusable in us, to restrain or condemn a free and impartial enquiry in matters of religion. For to deny any Christian doctrine to be tried at any time, by that rule, is to deny the rule itself, and to set up *human authority, above the word of God*. Thus have I given, I hope, a clear and full answer to the supposed objections that may be made, against what is here recommended, in favour of some necessary alterations in religion.

My good, most, and right reverend lords the bishops, ye are the worthy successors of the blessed apostles, in the work of the ministry of Christ. And I doubt not but your endeavours in general, are to imitate their examples, and I hope in all respects, to discharge your high office,

fice, according to St. *Paul's* directions to *Timothy*. But permit me to beseech and intreat you, in the spirit of Christian meekness and humility, well to weigh and duly regard what has been of late represented to your most serious consideration, for a new translation of the bible, a review and improvement of our liturgy, articles of faith, and canons of the church, in things necessary and expedient. The particulars which have been so fairly, so truly, so respectfully, and with so much reason and strength of argument submitted to your candid and impartial review, as fit and proper alterations and amendments to be made, cannot but leave some impressions on your lordships minds, endued with the principles of true Christianity. But, my Lords, of what use are reason, argument and conviction, if things which are proved to be actually amiss, and to require alteration and correction, still remain in the same unhappy state, without being rectified and amended. The particulars instanced in, are either what ought to be, or ought not to be altered. If it appears to your lordships, that the things complained of, do not want alteration, why will not your lordships publish an answer to what has been urged, with such strength of reason, in favour of a reformation, with your names subscribed thereto? This would be satisfactory: but without this, both the good and bad among us will think —. Or, if your lordships are of an opinion, that something should be done for the honour and greater purity

purity and perfection of true religion ; then, surely, no good reason can be assigned, why it should not be soon undertaken. The apostles, your lordships predecessors in Christ's ministry, were not deterred from their doing duty, by any appearances of the most dreadful persecutions, not even the most cruel deaths. But you, my lords, have none of these apprehensions to fear or dread. And permit me to observe, what your lordships very well know, that no temporal, or private views ought to hinder you, from performing the will of your lord and master, who laid down his life in charity to mankind ; that we might live in peace and unity, in love and good will one towards another. Your lordships also know, that at the day of judgment, we are to answer for the neglects and omissions of duty, as well as for the commission of sin. And I am truly persuaded in my own mind, that your lordships think it to be a duty incumbent on you, to take care and see that Christ's flock committed to your charge, be supplied in all things according to God's word.—That those who cannot eat meat, do not perish for want of proper food.—That both the strong and weak in faith, who are truly sincere, will find favour and acceptance with your lordships, the bishops and pastors of our church ; and not be forced to stray from our communion, and become guilty of schism, or at least branded with the odious and criminal name of schismatics. For you, my good lords, know, that these are duties agreeable to the
gospel

gospel of Christ, to the spirit of truth and peace, of love and unity. And therefore as bishops, under the great bishop of souls, your goodness, your piety, your sincerity, your love of truth, and the Christian religion, will not suffer or permit you to neglect them.

I have clearly demonstrated, from the best authorities, and many more might be produced, that our present thirty-nine articles are no bar to exclude bad men ; that they admit of various interpretations, and have been understood and subscribed in very opposite and contrary senses ; so that a diversity of opinion has not been prevented by subscribing to them, nor yet an uniformity of sentiments obtained ; and therefore they are of no real use or service, unless to exclude some few from the church, who can in no sense reconcile them to their own consciences, so as to subscribe them, and yet are otherwise very worthy good men. I have also proved, that the act of the 13th of *Eliz.* and by which all the *clergy are now bound*, as to subscribing the thirty-nine articles, does not require a subscription to ALL the articles, but ONLY to those, that concern the true Christian faith, and the doctrine of the sacraments. These are words as clear and plain, as any that can possibly be made use of. And as these facts cannot be denied or refuted, how reasonable, how necessary, how wise and Christian would it be, either to have our articles reviewed, and others established, that are more clear, certain, and indisputable ? (for your lordships
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See what differences, what perplexity, what disputes and confusion, the present ones occasion ;) or that none should be forced to subscribe to more of the articles than such, as ONLY concern the true *Christian faith, and the doctrine of the sacraments*, as directed by the 13th of *Eliz.* And if there be any doubt as to these, it will be worthy of your lordship's interposition, to procure an act, and have them distinguished and ascertained.

Your lordships have so lately as the last sessions of parliament, concurred in voting for an explanation of two of our acts of uniformity ; the 13th of *Eliz.* and the 13th and 14th of *Charles II.* and which affords a recent instance, and an argument taken from the highest authority, to prove my former observation, that subscription to the articles is not required from any but heads of colleges and lecturers, by the last act of uniformity : as also, that none of our acts of uniformity are so *sacred and inviolable*, as *not to be altered*. But, my good lords, if there were just reasons for doing this, on a late occasion, are there not *some* of much greater and more weighty importance, for explaining the same act of queen *Elizabeth* in favour of those, who would subscribe to the thirty-nine articles, according to both the letter and intention of that statute ? Nay, it deserves the serious consideration of the whole legislature, not longer to connive at, permit, and suffer a canon of our church to dispense with, supersede, and render invalid, an act of the whole legislative power.

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This is an evil of too long a standing, and in its consequence no less than an usurpation over the law, and the consciences of many learned, pious and good men ; in opposition to, and even against, the very clear words, spirit and meaning of an act of parliament, and which therefore requires and demands speedy redress. And what good reason can be assigned, why we should stretch or go beyond the *law*, to oppress the consciences of men, and exclude them from our communion ; rather than to mitigate the rigour even of a supposed law, in favour of those who insist, that both the letter and spirit of it is in their favour ; and only the illegal exercise of it against them. This, my lords, is a concern of great moment, and I am in hopes will admit of the most serious attention.

Once more, my good lords, whom I truly honour and reverence, and would not willingly offend, by this humble address, which, on such an occasion, I apprehend cannot be too solemn and pathetic. —

As our church is considered as the *head* of the *protestant interest*, and the *centre of protestant unity*, it behoves your lordships to be exceeding careful and solicitous, to have removed out of it, all errors and mistakes, or even blemishes, that may seem to render it less deserving of the esteem and imitation of other reformed churches ; that so, by the new lustre of a brighter and clearer reformation, it may continue to be a more permanent pillar, a more solid bulwark of the protestant religion ; also a model to all

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others,

others, as to the soundness of its doctrine, the purity of its worship, and the exactness of its discipline. This would be worthy of your lordships emulation; worthy of cotemporary bishops in this learned and enlightened age; and redound to your lordship's future glory, in generations to come. If our liturgy, articles and canons, were once reviewed, altered and improved, we should begin an æra of a new reformation. And then would the name of *Cranmer* and *Ridley*, *Hooper* and *Latimer*, in part, grow obscure, and suffer an eclipse, from the more resplendent and amiable names of *Herring* and *Hutton*, *Sherlock* and *Hoadley*, *Butler*, *Secker*, and *Benson*, and many others on your lordships bench, needless to mention. And may these reflections have a proper influence on all your lordships minds, so as to engage you to undertake, begin and perfect, what may be most for the real benefit of Christ's religion, and the honour of our established church, are the true and unfeigned wishes of him, who prays for their prosperity and that of your lordships.

I conclude in the words of our excellent bishop *Hoadley*: "Who gives the more sincere proofs of his concern for religion, and the glory of God? he who pleads for amending things, that *have not formerly been sufficiently considered*? or, he who would appear to contend earnestly for the continuance of that burden, under which *many good men*, as I have understood, have long groaned *?."

* Answer to Committee, page 50.

P O S T S C R I P T.

IN confirmation of what I have before asserted, with respect to the invalidity of the 36th canon; and as to the distinction made between subscribing to articles of faith and doctrine, and such as are not so, by the 13th of *Eliz.* I beg leave to produce what archbishop *Wake* has offered on a similar occasion, and which but lately occurred to me.

This learned prelate, having cited part of the 25th of *Henry VIII.* that “ *no canons, constitutions, or ordinances, shall be made, or put in execution, within this realm, by the authority of the convocation of the clergy, which shall be contrary, or repugnant to the king’s prerogative royal, or to the customs, laws, or statutes of this realm* ; thus proceeds *. And from whence, as they are naturally deduced, so were these two points delivered by the judges, before the committee of the lords, *as the law*, with reference to this matter ||. “ 1st. That when upon conference, the convocation has concluded any canons, yet they cannot execute any of them, without the royal assent. And, 2dly, that they cannot execute any, after royal assent, but with these four limitations. 1. That they be not against the king’s prerogative. 2. Nor against

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* Authority of Christian princes, page 128.

|| Ibid. 129. 12 rep. trin. 8. *Jam.* 1. page 72.

the common-law. 3. Nor against any *statute-law*. 4. Nor against any custom of the realm. And this the learned reporter (*Coke*) tells us, was but an affirmative of what was the law, before the said statutes; as appears by the 19th of *Edward III.* title, *Quare non admittit.* 7. Where it is held, that if a *canon law* be against the law of the land, the bishop ought to obey the commandment of the king, according to the law of the land." This now deserves a very serious consideration; as the 36th canon is expressly in part against the 13th of *Eliz.*

From hence the archbishop observes ||, that as "the king's licence cannot give the convocation any authority to promulge or execute any canons, but what are agreeable to the laws and customs of the realm; it must of necessity follow, 1. that the king has not only a right to review the acts of every such convocation; but ought moreover to submit them to the examination of his learned council in the law, to judge whether they be consistent with the laws of his realm.— 2. that notwithstanding the resolution of the clergy in their convocation, yet still the king is to remain the last judge, not only of the lawfulness, but of the expediency too, of their constitutions; and has authority either to ratify, or reject them, as he, with the advice of his council, shall think them either useful, or otherwise to the church." —

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“ Whether our kings may not only confirm such, and so many of the canons, &c. of their convocations, as they shall judge expedient; and refuse and reject the rest; but may also, by their *supreme authority*, in ecclesiastical matters, correct and amend, those which they do allow of, I shall not undertake to say: but so we are told *Henry VIII.* did, and that in a case of the strictest nature*; in framing the very *articles of religion*, which were afterwards published by his authority, 1536. Thus much, I believe, may warrantably be asserted; that as the king has power, *without a convocation*, to make and publish such injunctions as he shall think the necessities of the church to require, and to command the observance of them; so may he, *with the advice and consent of his parliament*, much more, not only make what ecclesiastical laws he shall think fitting, for the discipline of the church; but make such use of the convocation, and the resolutions agreed to in it, in order thereunto, as he shall think fit; and may not confirm, or disallow, but may even sometimes alter and correct, what is done by them according to his own liking ||.” Again,

“ The articles of religion, were not only corrected by that prince, after they had been framed by the convocation, but were drawn up by them, according to the method and directions, which he gave to them for that purpose. So his declaration

* Burnet's hist. ref. page 217.

|| Wake, ibid. page 135.

sion to all his loving subjects, in confirmation of these articles, informs us * : “ And for because we would the said articles, and every of them should be taken, and understanden of you, after such sort, order, and degree, as appertaineth accordingly ; *we have caused* by the assent, and agreement of our bishops and other learned men, the said articles to be divided into *two parts* ; whereof the *one part* containeth such things, as be *commanded expressly by God, and be necessary to salvation* ; and the *other* containeth such things as have been of a long continuance, for a *decent order*, &c. tho’ they be not *expressly commanded of God, nor necessary to salvation*.”—

“ It sufficiently appears that the articles here referred to, did at least in one great part of them relate to *doctrines of faith* ; and that in the most *necessary points* of it. And yet see what liberty that *king took in judging, as well as correcting* of what they (*the convocation*) had done. He declares his sense of what the clergy had done in these words. “ After long and mature deliberation had of, and upon the premises, finally they have concluded and agreed upon, the most special points and articles ; as well such as *be commanded of God, and are necessary to our salvation* ; as also diverse *other matters* touching the *honest ceremonies, and good, and politick orders*, as is aforesaid, which being, as *we think*, agreeable to the laws and ordinances of God ;
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* Ibid. page 137. Fuller’s church history, page 214. anno 1536.

we have caused the same to be published ; willing, requiring, and commanding you to accept, repute, and take them accordingly ||."

But here were no *subscriptions enjoined* to these *articles*, altho' a distinction was justly made between such as related to doctrines of faith, and those which did not ; and this very well corresponds with the 13th of *Eliz.* as to the subscribing such of the articles, as *only* concerned the articles of faith, and the doctrine of the sacraments. These extracts from archbishop *Wake*, strongly corroborate what I have before asserted concerning the canons, and a limited subscription. And, continues that author, " such a judgment did this prince assume to himself, over those acts of his *clergy*, and so little have our princes thought themselves obliged, either *to receive themselves*, or *to impose upon others*, any of their orders, or decisions ; but *only* as they were finally persuaded, that what they had done, proceeded from a sound judgment, and would be for the benefit of their church and kingdom to be observed †."

And if we would know, says the same great author ||, " after what manner *ecclesiastical affairs* have been transacted, since the time of the reformation ; we shall find it to have been, by some or other of these five ways. 1. Sometimes the king has, by his own authority, set forth such orders, as he thought fit should be observed

† *Wake*, *ibid.* page 137, 138, 139.

|| *Ibid.* page 254, &c.

observed by the clergy of the realm ; and directed them to his archbishops and bishops for that end. And this either by letter or injunctions. 2. Another method has been, by the authority of king and parliament, without the help of any other *ecclesiastical deliberation*, than what the archbishops and bishops in the upper house have given to them. *Many are the acts of this nature which have passed*, I do not say since the reformation, but even within our own memories : such were the *acts against conventicles*, in the 16th and 22d of Car. II. The *two test-acts*, in his 25th and 30th years. The *act of toleration*, in the 1st of the present king William ; not to mention any *others* of an *elder date*. 3. Another way is to do it by some select committees. When the king having appointed a certain number of bishops and clergymen, to consider what may be fit to be ordered in such cases, as he thinks fit to refer to them ; afterwards sets forth by his *royal authority*, what has by their advice, been recommended to him. After this manner was the reformation, in a great measure, carried on ; and the most important affairs of the church dispatched. There is a 4th way our princes have often taken in these cases ; and that is, to refer not to a *particular committee*, but to their two convocations, what they would have done : and having seen and approved their conclusions, to give their royal assent and authority thereunto. Upon this foundation stand our book of canons, drawn up by

by the convocation of 1603, and ratified and confirmed by king *James I.* and after the same manner were those drawn up, which gave so much offence, and were authorized by *Car. I.* in 1640* ; but above all, as the most solemn, so the most undoubtedly *authoritative* way of transacting of such matters as these, is, 5thly, when the king designing any constitution of a more than ordinary concern to the church and realm ; does for the more prudent establishment of it, first, by a *select committee*, prepare what he thinks needful to propose to the convocation concerning it, then has it examined and concluded there ; and having reviewed it with his privy council, and his learned council in the law, finally refers it to his two houses of parliament, where being also consented to and approved of, he finally himself subscribes to it, and makes it a part of the statute law of the realm. Thus has our *common prayer* from time to time been settled : our *episcopal government* and ordinals been confirmed, and finally our *thirty-nine articles* been established. But as the choice of these several methods of carrying on such affairs, requires much prudence in the determination, so has *our law intirely submitted it to the prince's authority.*"——

" And all reasonable men must think it very just and equitable, that his *majesty* should be left to that liberty, which both the law has intrusted him with, and his own reason vindicated to him ;

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* *Vide the query at the end.*

I mean, of considering what *he thinks*, in *such cases* to be *most fitting to be done*, and to *act* accordingly. If by this means he should chance to be mistaken in his choice, it is a *human infirmity*; and what good men will easily make an allowance for, in a station where so much is to be done, and it is so difficult oftentimes to judge what is best. And let the *positive censorious* part of the world, if for nothing else, yet at least for their own sakes consider this; that a kingdom is a large place; and that it is not impossible, but that among such numbers of men, as there are in it, some may be as firmly persuaded the *prince* is in *the right*, as *others* can presume that he is *in the wrong*." I beg leave to conclude this postscript, with the following queries, which are humbly submitted to consideration.

2. As the declaration prefixed to the thirty-nine articles, is that of *James I.* whether it be now of any power, force, or efficacy whatever? since it is apprehended, that no king's declaration, or proclamation, is valid for any longer time, than during their own reign; unless renewed by every reigning prince.

2. How far our present canons are valid and obligatory, either on the clergy, or laity, they not being established by act of parliament? For it was resolved by the house of commons in 1640*, "That the clergy of *England*, consented

* *Rush. collect.* page 1365. *Wake's state of the church*, page 515.

vented in any *convocation* or *synod*, or *otherwise*, have no power to make any constitutions, canons, or acts whatsoever, in matter of *doctrine*, discipline or otherwise, to bind the clergy or laity of the land, without common consent of parliament." and whether this be not really the law of the land, tho' their acts should be ratified by the King?

vested in any corporation or society, or otherwise, have no power to make any constitution, canon, or rule whatsoever, in matter of doctrine, discipline or otherwise, to bind the clergy or laity of the land, without common consent of parliament; and whether this be not really contrary to the law of the land, tho' their acts should be ratified by the king.

The king's power is not to be understood as extending to the making of laws in matters of religion, but only to the ratification of such laws as are made by the clergy and laity in common council.

It is also to be observed, that the king's power is not to be understood as extending to the making of laws in matters of religion, but only to the ratification of such laws as are made by the clergy and laity in common council.

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P R E F A C E.

LOVE to truth and peace, and with a view to promote the Christian unity, were the sole motives to the making this public, and which I the rather presumed to do, in hopes it may excite some one or more of superior abilities, to improve this plan, and carry it to much greater exactness and perfection.

The more learned, and truly religious among us, both of the clergy and laity, are very sensible how highly necessary it is, that some alterations should be made in our articles of religion, as well as in our liturgy and canons. But if no one will begin to recommend particulars, we have no great reason to expect it will ever be effected. And tho' it may happen, that no attempts should be made in our days, by those in authority, for the alteration and improvement of our liturgy, articles and canons, and for a new translation of the bible, yet let none who are well-wishers to such laudable, nay, pious and Christian undertakings, despond, or suffer themselves to despair of its being accomplished; because we may have good reason to hope and expect, that what has been of late years represented to our governors, urged and enforced with great strength of reason and argument, in favour of such excellent designs for the benefit of true religion, may, by the mercy and goodness of heaven, in some future time, if not in our own, meet with suitable encouragement. A solid and permanent foundation may be now laid, for our successors to improve, proceed in, and build upon. And we need not doubt or fear, but that the Almighty, when he sees it best and most fitting, will give success to the labours of those who endeavour to promote the cause of truth, and the gospel of Christ,

P R E F A C E.

Christ, and procure the right knowledge, and sincere practice of the Christian religion.

It was many years before the present reformation; could be brought to that degree of perfection it now is. And God for our sins, may permit it to remain for some longer time, still imperfect and incomplete. But let all take courage, and resolve to persevere in recommending the design. Let all use their utmost endeavours, offer their mite, and do what they can, to contribute to the accomplishment of so glorious a work. For tho' luxury, licentiousness and levity of mind, the natural consequences of irreligion and inconsideration, are so prevalent among us; and do so much abound, as to influence the many, to slight and reject whatever is serious, or that concerns the knowledge and practice of true religion: yet should the Almighty more severely visit us with the rod of his anger, till he has made us more humble, thoughtful, and religious; then we may at last sorely repent of our obstinate negligence, and take shame to ourselves, that we had not seen in this our day, the things which belong to our peace.

I have only farther briefly to observe, that the following specimen contains the substance of thirty-one of the thirty-nine articles, tho' reduced in number to twenty-one; the others not appearing to be any way necessary to be retained. And as to these, I would beg leave humbly to propose, that none of them should be required to be subscribed by any clergyman, more than, or but only the 1st, 2d, 3d, 4th, 14th, 15th, and 16th. and the rest to be considered as a declaration or standard of the doctrines professed and believed by our church. And this is agreeable to the design of our first reformers by the 13th of Eliz. as I have evidently demonstrated: all which is humbly submitted to the consideration of our governors.

I. *Of faith in the holy Trinity.*

THERE is but one living, true, and eternal God, the Father Almighty, without body, parts or passions; of infinite power, wisdom and goodness, the maker and preserver of all things, both visible and invisible (*a*): and one lord Jesus Christ, son of God (*b*), begotten of the father, before all worlds [or ages]; very and true God (*c*); who came down from heaven, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed virgin (*d*), of her substance; and was God and man in one person (*e*), whereof is one Christ; who truly suffered, was crucified (*f*), dead and buried, to reconcile his father to us, and to be a sacrifice (*g*) for the sins of all men; he rose again from death (*b*), ascended into heaven, and there sitteth, until he shall return to judge the world at the last day: and one holy spirit, the lord and giver of life, of the same divine nature with the father and the son.

(*a*) Mark xii. 32. John xvii. 1. 3. Deut. xxxiii. 27.
 1 Tim. i. 17. Luke i. 37. Job. ix. 4. xxxvi. 5.
 (*b*) Mark i. 1. John viii. 42. (*c*) Phil. ii. 6. Col.
 i. 15, 16. Heb. i. 3. John i. 1, 2. (*d*) Luke i. 34, 35.
 (*e*) 1 Tim. iii. 16. John i. 14. (*f*) Luke xxiii. 33. 46.
 53. (*g*) John i. 29. 2 Cor. v. 21. Mat. xx. 28.
 (*h*) Acts iv. 10, 33. i. 9. Luke xxiii. 51.

II. *Of the sufficiency of the holy scriptures for salvation.*

The holy scriptures, comprized in the old and new testament, contain all things (*i*) necessary

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(*i*) John v. 39. 2 Tim. iii. 15.

to salvation ; so that what is not read therein, nor may be clearly proved thereby, ought not to be required of any man to be believed, as an article of faith, necessary to salvation (*k*). For we must not add to, nor diminish from, the word which God commands. By the holy scriptures we mean, only the canonical books of the old and new testament, as they are commonly received ; *to wit*, all but those which are generally known by the name of the apocryphal books or writings.

(*k*) Deut. iv. 2. Rev. xxii. 18.

III. *Of the old and new testament.*

There is a perfect harmony and agreement, between the old testament and the new (*l*) ; for in both, everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only mediator between God and man (*m*) ; being both God and man (*n*) : and altho' the law given by *Moses*, as to ceremonies, and the civil precepts of it, doth not bind Christians : yet all such are obliged to observe the moral commandments which he delivered (*o*).

(*l*) John v. 46. Acts iii. 20. (*m*) 1 Tim. ii. 5.
(*n*) John i. 14. Phil. ii. 6, 7. (*o*) Rom. iii. 31. vii. 12.

IV. *Of the creeds.*

The creeds, commonly called the *Nicene*, or rather the *Constantinopolitan*, and the apostle's creed, ought to be received and believed, because they may be proved by the holy scriptures.

N.

N. B. Christ's descent into hell, should be omitted in the apostle's creed, as it is in the *Nicene*.

V. *Of original sin.*

Since the fall of *Adam*, the nature of man is become so corrupt, as to be greatly depraved, having departed from its primitive innocence (*p*), and that original righteousness in which it was at first created by God (*q*). For we are now so naturally inclined to do evil, that the flesh is continually striving to act contrary to the spirit of God. Which corrupt inclination still remains even in the regenerate; who when they would do good, evil is present with them (*r*). But tho' there is no man living, who sinneth not (*s*); yet we must use our sincere endeavours to keep the whole law of God (*t*), so far as we possibly can.

(*p*) Rom. iii. 23. (*q*) Eccles. vii. 29. Ephes. ii. 3.
 Psal. lviii. 3. (*r*) Rom. vii. 21. (*s*) Rom. iii. 23.
 1 Kings viii. 46. James iii. 2. (*t*) James ii. 20.

VI. *Of free will.*

Altho' we cannot of ourselves, without the aid of God's grace, do such things as are pleasing and acceptable to him, for in and by him we live, move, and have our being, and our sufficiency is of God (*u*); yet if we pray unto God (*x*) to assist our honest endeavours, he will enable us to do our duty, thro' Christ (*y*) strength-

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ning

(*u*) 2 Cor. iii. 5. (*x*) Matt. xxi. 22. 1 John v. 14.
 (*y*) Phil. iv. 13.

mingius. For we must not receive the grace of God (z) in vain, nor be weary in well-doing, but work out our own salvation.

(z) 2 Cor. vi. 1. Gal. vi. 9. Phil. ii, 12.

VII. *Of justification.*

We are esteemed righteous before God, only for the merits of our lord and saviour Jesus (a) Christ by faith in him, accompanied with good works (b), which are the fruits of faith, and, as such, are pleasing and acceptable to God. So that a true and lively faith is as evidently known by good works (c), as a good tree is discerned by its fruits. But works of supererogation, that is, such as the church of *Rome* pretends we may perform over and above our duty, or more than God requires, are impious, arrogant, and contrary to scripture (d).

(a) Col. i. 13, 14. Rom. iii. 24. (b) Tit. ii. 14.
James ii. 17, 24, 26. (c) James ii. 14. xviii. 26.
(d) Luke xvii. 10.

VIII. *Of Christ alone without sin.*

Christ, by taking human nature on him, was made like unto us, in all things, sin only excepted. He was a lamb without spot; and by the sacrifice of himself, once offered, made atonement and propitiation for the sins of the world (e); and sin was not in him (f). But all mankind besides, tho' baptized, and born again
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(e) 1 Pet. i. 19. Heb. ix. 26, 28. Rom. iii. 25.
1 John ii. 2. (f) 1 John iii. 5.

in Christ, do offend in many things (g). For if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us (h).

(g) James iii. 2.

(h) 1 John i. 8.

IX. *Of sin after baptism.*

Those who fall into sin after baptism, may be renewed by repentance; for tho', after we have received God's grace, we may depart from it, by falling into sin; yet, thro' the assistance of his holy spirit, we may by repentance, and the amendment of our lives, be restored again to his favour. God will not deny forgiveness of sins to those who truly repent, and do that which is lawful and right; but all such (i), thro' his mercy in Christ Jesus, shall save their souls alive.

(i) Ezekiel xviii. 27.

X. *Of predestination.*

Predestination to life, with respect to every man's salvation, is the everlasting purpose of God, secret to us. And the right knowledge of what is revealed concerning it, is full of comfort to such truly religious Christians, as feel in themselves the spirit of Christ, mortifying the works of the flesh, and their earthly affections, and raising their minds to heavenly things. But we must receive God's promises, as they be generally declared in holy scripture, and do his will, as therein is expressly directed: for without holiness of life, no man shall be saved.

XI.

XI. *Of obtaining salvation thro' Christ.*

Tho' we presume not to say, that every man shall be damned, who diligently leads his life according to the law and light of nature, not having the opportunity of knowing God's revealed will in Christ; yet the holy scriptures declare unto us, only the name of *Jesus Christ*, whereby we can be saved (k).

(k) Acts iv. 12.

XII. *Of the church, and its authority.*

The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, wherein the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments are duly administered, according to Christ's ordinance in all things necessary and requisite. And every national or particular church, hath power to ordain, change, and abolish rites and ceremonies, for the more decent order, and good government thereof; so that all things be done to edifying. But it is not lawful for the church to ordain any thing contrary to God's word, nor so to expound the scriptures, as to make one part seem repugnant to another; nor to decree, or enforce any thing to be believed as necessary to salvation, that is contrary to God's holy word. General councils and churches are liable to err, and have erred; even in matters of faith and doctrine, as well as in their ceremonies and manner of living.

Of

XIII. *Of purgatory.*

The *Romish* doctrine of purgatory, pardons, worshipping of images and relicks, and invocation of saints, is a vain and wicked invention, not founded on scripture, but is directly contrary to the same (*l*).

(*l*) Matt. iv. 10. Col. ii. 19, 20.

XIV. *Of ministring in the congregation.*

No man ought to take upon himself the office of public preaching, or administering the sacraments in the congregation, but he who is lawfully called to this work, by such as have public authority given unto them, for that purpose. And it is contrary to God's word, and the custom of the primitive church to have public prayer, or the sacraments, administered in the church, in a tongue not understood by the people.

XV. *Of the sacraments.*

There are two sacraments, ordained by Christ our Lord in the gospel, namely, baptism and the supper of our lord. Confirmation, penance, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction, tho' called sacraments by the church of *Rome*, yet are not so, as not being of the nature of sacraments, nor having any visible sign or ceremony, ordained of God.

XVI. *Of baptism.*

Baptism is a sign both to distinguish Christians from others, as also of regeneration, or a new birth, whereby, they who receive it, are
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admitted into the church. The being adopted sons of God by the holy spirit, is thereby visibly signed and sealed. Faith is also confirmed, and grace increased to adult persons, by virtue of prayer unto God. The baptism of young children ought to be retained in the church, as most agreeable to the institution of Christ.

XVII. *Of the Lord's supper.*

The supper of the Lord is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death. The bread which we break and eat, is a representation of the body of Christ; and the cup of blessing, of which we drink, is a representation of the blood of Christ; signifying thereby the death and passion of our blessed Saviour, who died for our sins. This sacrament is a memorial, or commemoration, of Christ's death, by which also we express the love that Christians ought to have, one for another.

Transubstantiation, or the change of the bread and wine in the Lord's supper, into the body and blood of Christ, cannot be proved by holy writ; but is repugnant to the plain words thereof, and to the nature of a sacrament; it is also contrary to our senses, and our reason, and hath occasioned many superstitions. The cup of the Lord ought not to be denied the laity, but should be administered to all sincere Christians.

XVIII. *Of the one oblation of Christ.*

The offering of Christ's body on the cross, is that perfect redemption, propitiation and satisfaction

tisfaction which he then, and once only, made by his blood, for the sins of the whole world, both original, and actual : having once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God (m) : and there is no other satisfaction for sin, than that alone. The sacrifices of masses, by which the church of *Rome* pretends to offer Christ for the remission of sins, are most blasphemous and dangerous inventions.

(m) Heb. ix. 38. 1 Pet. iii. 18.

XIX. *Of the marriage of priests.*

Bishops, priests and deacons are not forbidden by God's law to abstain from marriage ; but it is as lawful for them, as for other men to marry, if they think it expedient.

XX. *Of the civil magistrate.*

The king's majesty hath the chief power in these kingdoms, in all things both ecclesiastical and civil ; and he neither is, nor ought to be subject to any foreign power ; nor hath the bishop of *Rome* any jurisdiction whatsoever in these realms.

XXI. *Of a Christian man's oath.*

The Christian religion doth not prohibit any man from taking an oath, when required by the magistrate, in a just cause, so it be done, according to justice, judgment and truth. But all vain and rash swearing is forbidden by the holy scriptures.

F I N I S.



ERRATA.

PAGE 14. Line 20. read *against*. p. 24. l. 22. dele 3. p. 26. l. 28. read 1599. p. 26. l. ult. in the note, add 372. p. 33. l. ult. in the note, read 406, 407. p. 36 l. 20. read 13 of *Eliz.* p. 44. in the note, read *Bennet's essay*. page 78. l. 5. read *doing their duty*.

